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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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PHOTO: FREEPIK

Woman gangraped in Telangana

HYDERABAD, 1 APRIL

Seven people were apprehended for allegedly raping a woman in Telangana's Nagarkurnool district, police said on Tuesday. The incident reportedly happened at Urkondapeta village on 29 March, where the victim along with her husband had gone for a temple darshan. While the woman had gone to attend nature's call at night, the accused forcibly took her to an isolated spot and allegedly raped her. They tied her husband to a tree. The accused including an electrician, an auto-driver and two cooks are also involved in extortion cases. Hyderabad Women and Child Welfare Minister D Anasuya Seethakka directed the police to help the victims and ensure tough punishment to the culprits. — *PTI*

Courts can determine rate of interest: SC

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

The Supreme Court has reaffirmed that courts possess the authority to determine interest rates and the appropriate timeline for interest accrual in legal cases. The ruling emerged from a protracted 52-year dispute involving IK Merchants Pvt Ltd and the Rajasthan government concerning the valuation of transferred shares. In its 32-page judgement, a bench led by Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan stated that judges can set interest rates based on the unique facts of each case, including whether interest should be calculated from the suit's filing date, an earlier date, or from the decree. The appeal challenged decisions made by the Calcutta High Court in April 2022, with the Court modifying the interest rate for delayed payments related to the share valuation. —*PTI*

Speeding car claims life of boy in Udupi

UDUPI, 1 APRIL

A 14-year-old boy was killed on Tuesday after being struck allegedly by a speeding car while crossing NH 66 in Brahmavara in Udupi district, police said. The incident occurred around 8.30 AM when Vamsh Shetty, a Class 6 student at SMS School, was heading to a summer camp, they said. The driver of the offending vehicle, Akhilesh, 21, from Kalaburagi, was arrested by Brahmavara police, who have registered a case in connection with the incident, police said. Preliminary inquiry suggested that the car was allegedly over-speeding as it approached from the Kundapur side, they said. According to the police, Shetty was rushed to a nearby private hospital but succumbed to his injuries. His parents, originally from Vakvady village, reside in Brahmavara. The incident occurred at a junction identified as a blackspot by district authorities due to frequent accidents. —*PTI*

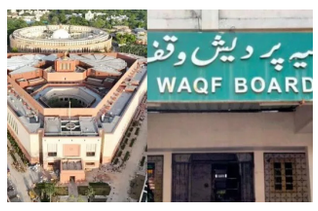
LS to take up Waqf Bill today, parties issue whip to all MPs

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

The Lok Sabha will take up the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill for discussion and passage on Wednesday, setting the stage for a showdown between a government determined to push it through and an opposition united in condemning the proposed law as unconstitutional.

Ahead of the government bringing the Waqf bill amendments, the Congress issued a three-line whip to all its MPs in the Lok Sabha, ensuring their presence in the House for the next three days for discussion and debate, sources said.

Minorities and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju told reporters that the Lok Sabha's business advisory committee (BAC), which includes leaders from all major parties, chaired by Speaker Om Birla agreed



on an eight-hour debate, which could be extended after taking the sense of the House.

The early signs of a likely raucous debate between the

- Gaurav Gogoi alleged that their voices were being ignored.

treasury and opposition benches over the bill were visible during the meeting as the Congress and several other opposition INDIA bloc members walked out of the meeting, accusing the government of stifling their voice.

However, the political heat and length of the debate are unlikely to have any bearing on the final outcome as the numbers heavily favour the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha with allies like TDP and JD(U) initially reluctant but have come around to offering their support after the joint committee of parliament adopted a few of their suggestions

Congress' deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi alleged that their voices were being ignored and said the opposition parties wanted more time to debate and the House to take up more issues, including the situation in Manipur and the row over electors' photo identity card.

AIMIM member Asaduddin Owaisi, a sharp critic of the bill, told reporters that he will put forth his view during the debate to show how "unconstitutional" it is. —*PTI*

India will be dropping its tariffs substantially: Trump

White House says India charges 100% tariff on agri goods

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 1 APRIL

US President Donald Trump announced that India will be "dropping its tariffs substantially," ahead of his planned reciprocal tariffs on foreign goods set to take effect on 2 April. This statement came after the White House criticised India's trade practices, notably its 100 per cent tariff on American agricultural products. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt condemned these high tariffs, describing them as making it "virtually impossible" for US products to enter India and other markets that impose similar levies.

Leavitt pointed out that the European Union charges a 50% tariff on American dairy products, Japan imposes a 700 per cent tariff on US rice, and Canada levies a nearly 300% tariff on US butter and cheese. She called these practices

Donald Trump *PHOTO: PTI*

unfair and harmful to American workers and businesses.

Trump's announcement aligns with the release of the 2025 National Trade Estimate (NTE) report by the US Trade Representative (USTR) on 31 March, which highlighted India's high import duties across a range of goods. Tariffs on vegetable oils, motorcycles, and apples range from 45% to 50%, while products like coffee, walnuts, and alcoholic beverages face duties as high as 150%. Additionally, India's tariffs on life-saving drug formulations were noted as a significant barrier to trade.

The USTR report also criticised India's non-tariff barriers, including import bans, licensing requirements, and mandatory certifications, which complicate market access for US businesses.

If reciprocal tariffs are enforced, several Indian exports to the US could be severely impacted. These include alcoholic beverages (with a 122.1 per cent tariff hike), dairy products (38.2 per cent tariff differential), and seafood (27.8 per cent tariff differential). Other affected sectors include processed foods, footwear, pharmaceuticals, and edible oils, potentially raising costs and reducing competitiveness. —*PTI*

India's tariff policy aims to regulate trade: Govt

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

India's tariff policy is designed to regulate trade, protect domestic industries, and generate revenue, Union Minister Jitin Prasada told the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Responding to a question on NITI Aayog's recent statement that reducing tariffs is essential for economic growth, Prasada said the government aims to balance the interests of consumers and producers while fostering global competitiveness.

Jitin Prasada *PHOTO: WWW.COMMERCE.GOV.IN*

He highlighted that India is a member of the WTO and follows bound tariffs, while focusing on Preferential/Free Trade Agreements (FTAs/PTAs) to reduce trade barriers with partner nations. India is currently involved in 13 FTAs and 9 PTAs.

Prasada noted that recent tariff reforms, such as eliminating import duties on EV battery and mobile phone manufacturing inputs, aim to reduce production costs and enhance competitiveness. —*PTI*

Mkt falls 1,390 pts ahead of US 'Liberation Day'

MUMBAI, 1 APRIL

Indian stock markets experienced a severe decline on Tuesday, with the benchmark Sensex crashing by 1,390 points due to widespread selling in IT and private banking shares. This downturn comes amid growing uncertainty surrounding the imminent rollout of reciprocal tariffs by the United States on 2 April, an event designated as 'Liberation Day' by President Donald Trump.

Beginning the new financial year on a disturbing note, the 30-share Sensex plummeted by 1,390.41 points, or 1.80 per cent, closing at 76,024.51, with 28 of its components finishing lower and only two advancing. During the session, the index fell by 1,502.74 points, or 1.94 per cent, dipping to 75,912.18. —*PTI*

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'PAY VICTIMS RS 10L'

Inhuman demolition in UP shocks our conscience: SC

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Calling the demolition of residential homes in Prayagraj "inhuman and illegal", the Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the city development authority to pay Rs 10 lakh compensation to each aggrieved house owner within six weeks. "The manner in which the demolition has taken place shocks our conscience. Residences of the appellants have been high-handedly demolished. There is something called right to shelter, due process of law," said a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan.

Pointing out to the viral video from Ambedkar Nagar's Jalalpur where an eight-year-old girl clutching her books and running away as a bulldozer razes her shanty during an anti-encroachment drive in UP, the Justice Bhuyan said it had "shocked everybody".

The bench said the "high handed" manner of the demolitions showed insensitivity on the part of authority while underlining the "rule of the law in the country". Residential structures of citizens cannot be demolished in such fashion, it added.

The apex court said the Prayagraj Development Authority must remember right to shelter is an integral part of Article 21 and there is a rule of law which is basic part of the Constitution.

The top court said the demolition was carried out by the authority under Section 27 of the UP Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973 without issuing proper show cause notices.

"The object of the proviso to Section 27(1) is to provide a reasonable opportunity to showcase before demolition. This is no way of granting a reasonable opportunity," the top Court said. —*PTI*

SC rejects new plea over Places of Worship Act

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to hear a fresh plea challenging the validity of a provision of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which mandates maintaining the religious character of a place as it existed on 15 August, 1947. On Tuesday, Nitin Upadhyay, a law student, urged the bench to add his plea, too, to the six pending petitions in this connection. "We are not inclined to entertain a fresh PIL under Article 32...," the CJI said. —*PTI*

India's NE landlocked, B'desh is your gateway: Yunus to China

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Seeking for "extension of the Chinese economy", Bangladesh interim government's chief advisor Professor Muhammad Yunus has said that with Northeast India "landlocked", Dhaka is the "only guardian of the ocean for all this region".

While Yunus made these remarks during his four-day visit to China last week (March 26 to 29), video clips of his speech were shared by the interim government on its social media handles.

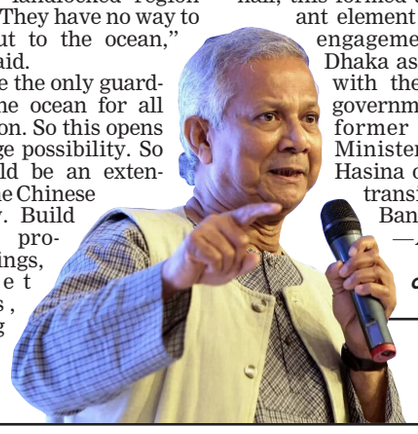
"Seven states of India, eastern part of India, called seven sisters... they are landlocked country, landlocked region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean," Yunus said.

"We are the only guardian of the ocean for all this region. So this opens up a huge possibility. So this could be an extension of the Chinese economy. Build things, produce things, market things, bring things to China, bring it out to the whole rest of the world," he said.

The strategic Siliguri Corridor, called the 'Chicken's Neck' for its shape, is a strip of land located in northern West Bengal, having a width of just over 20 km. This narrow strip, which connects the Northeast to the rest of India, is sandwiched between Nepal and Bangladesh, with Bhutan and China a few hundred km away.

For India, access to and from the Northeast states — through the 'Chicken's Neck' corridor in north Bengal — has been a challenge, economically and strategically. Over the last decade-and-a-half, this formed an important element of Delhi's engagement with Dhaka as it worked with the previous government led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on ways to transit through Bangladesh. —*Agencies*

>>>More on Page 3



Muhammad Yunus *PHOTO: X*

ACROSS COUNTRY

FASTag
EXPRESS NO CASH
CAR/JEEP/VAN
THIS TOLL PLAZA PREMISES IS UNDER CCTV SURVEILLANCE BY SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, PUNE (RURAL) OFFICE.

PHOTO: X

Tolls to get pricier as NHAI hikes charges by 4-5%

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Commuters on national highways and expressways will need to pay more for their road journeys, as the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has increased toll charges by an average of 4 to 5 per cent on highway sections across the country.

The revised toll charges for motorists on national highways across the country have come into effect from Tuesday, a senior highways ministry official told PTI.

NHAI notifies toll rate hikes for all the national highways and expressways separately.

According to him, the change in toll fee is part of an annual exercise to revise the rates that are linked to the changes in the wholesale price index-based inflation. Every year, it is implemented from 1 April.

The revised rates will affect the commuters of key routes across the country, including Delhi-Meerut Expersssways, Eastern Peripheral Expressway, and Delhi-Jaipur Highway, among others

There are around 855 user fee plazas on the national highway network on which user fee is levied as per National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008. Out of these, around 675 are public-funded fee plazas and 180 are concessionaire-operated toll plazas.

The revised rates will affect the commuters of key routes across the country, including Delhi-Meerut Expersssways, Eastern Peripheral Expressway, and Delhi-Jaipur Highway, among others. —*PTI*

21 killed in Gujarat cracker unit explosion

PALANPUR, 1 APRIL

Twenty-one people lost their lives while six others were injured on Tuesday after an explosion and blaze ripped through a godown where firecrackers were allegedly stored and manufactured illegally, leading to the structure collapse in Banaskantha district, officials said.

The explosion, which occurred at 9.45 am, flattened the godown in an industrial area near Deesa town. The blast was so intense that it sent body parts of workers flying 200-300 metres away. The impact brought down the RCC slab. Family members of workers staying on the premises were crushed to death after blocks of slabs fell on them.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel also expressed grief and declared financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh to the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured persons.

In a separate incident, the death toll from a gas cylinder explosion in Pathar Pratima, West Bengal, has risen to eight after one more victim succumbed to injuries. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

6 SDPI men held for pro-Palestine demonstration

BELAGAVI, 1 APRIL

Six activists attached to SDPI were detained for raising slogans in favour of Palestine after Eid Namaz at a few places in North Karnataka region on Monday. In Belagavi, after the prayers at Edga ground beside Anjuman Society, some SDPI activists displayed placards supporting Palestine and opposing the upcoming presentation of Wakf amendment bill in the Parliament. The activists also raised slogans in favour of Palestine in Hubballi, Shivamoga and Sagar after the Eid Namaz, leading to the detention of six activists. In Hubballi, an SDPI leader was taken into custody. They were freed after taking written undertakings. *—Salar News*

Colleague arrested after civic worker found murdered

BIDAR, 1 APRIL

A municipal worker was found murdered at her home at Shah-Hussain Colony of Basavakalyan town in Bidar district on Sunday afternoon, police have said. The body bore deep injuries on the nose, neck and mouth. Police identified the victim as Reshma. She lived with her mother, but the latter was away from home when the crime was committed. She was found dead in her bedroom. Police arrested the victim's colleague in connection with the murder within 24 hours. A police team led by Superintendent of Police Pradeep Gunti visited the crime scene and sent Reshma's body for post-mortem examination. Reshma's sister Asma Begum filed a complaint at the Basavakalyan Town Police Station. She said in the complaint that her sister was murdered. "We have seen Santosh, a colleague, frequently interacting with her. He is behind her murder," she said. *—Salar News*

Youth bludgeoned to death by lover's brothers

BIDAR, 1 APRIL

A 25-year-old youth was bludgeoned to death on Friday night by two brothers of a girl he was in love with in Nirgudi village of Bidar district. The victim, Prashant Biradar, was a driver in Pune who had returned home for his sister's wedding. While Biradar belonged to the Maratha community, the girl was from the Kuruba community. She is an engineer in a private company in Bengaluru. During his stay in the village, Biradar met the girl a few times, which angered her brothers. They confronted him in front of the village school and smashed his head with a stone, killing him on the spot. The accused, Yallaling Maitre and Prashant Maitre, have been arrested, police said. *—Salar News*

74-yr-old lone woman found dead at home

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

A 74-year-old woman, Siddamma, was found dead under suspicious circumstances at her home in RPC Layout, Vijayanagar, on Tuesday morning. Neighbours found her unresponsive and promptly notified the police. Siddamma, who lived alone on Railway Pipeline Road, was reported to have visited a neighbour at around 7pm on Monday. After a brief visit, she returned home, expressing her need for rest. Investigators noted that her earrings were missing, though an initial examination revealed no signs of forced entry or struggle and no visible injuries. Authorities suspect the earrings may have been removed posthumously. The police have registered a case of suspicious death at the Vijayanagar police station and initiated an investigation. *—Salar News*

CM urges Maharashtra to release water to State

Cites severe drinking water crisis in six northern districts

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

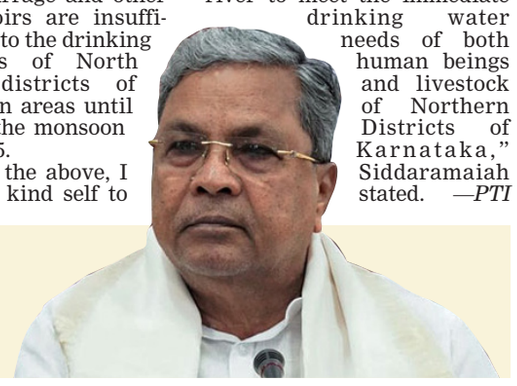
Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday requested his Maharashtra counterpart Devendra Fadnavis to release water from Wama/Koyna reservoir to Krishna river and from Ujjani reservoir to Bhima river to meet drinking water needs in North Karnataka regions.

In a letter to the Maharashtra chief minister, he highlighted that Belagavi, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Kalaburagi, Yadagiri and Raichur districts in north Karnataka have been facing severe shortages of drinking water since the beginning of March 2025.

Acknowledging the Maharashtra government's support during the summer seasons on earlier occasions, he thanked them for having responded positively for releasing water to Krishna river in the past as well to meet the drinking water needs of human beings and livestock.

At present, Siddaramaiah emphasised in the letter that the situation is becoming more critical with the rising temperatures and the existing storage levels in the Hipparagi Barrage and other local reservoirs are insufficient to cater to the drinking water needs of North Karnataka districts of Krishna Basin areas until the onset of the monsoon season in 2025.

"In view of the above, I request your kind self to direct the concerned authorities to release atleast 2.00 TMC of water from Warna/Koyna reservoir to Krishna river and 1.00 TMC of water from Ujjini reservoir to Bhima river to meet the immediate drinking water needs of both human beings and livestock of Northern Districts of Karnataka," Siddaramaiah stated. *—PTI*



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>
> —Siddaramaiah in his letter to

HDK calls Cong govt a 'price hike demon'

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Tuesday criticised the Siddaramaiah-led dispensation in Karnataka, accusing it of turning into a "price hike demon" that is draining the blood of people.

He accused the state government of deception and frequent price hikes. "This is the governance style of the Karnataka East India Congress Company government. From today, the Congress Company government is imposing a cess even on garbage. It is draining the blood of the people." he said in a statement.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) had on Saturday presented its budget for 2025–26, in which it also proposed to collect a solid waste management user fee along with property tax.

Kumaraswamy alleged that the government was using its "five guarantees" as a pretext to increase prices.

"Its real intention is nothing but looting the people. Even Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori, who invaded India and looted it continuously, would be ashamed of the price hike campaign being imposed on Kannadigas by the Congress government," he said.

the JDS leader alleged that it has destroyed a once-prosperous Karnataka through "misgovernance" and has now transformed into a "price hike demon" to bleed the people dry.

"They have increased the prices of water, metro rail, KSRTC bus tickets, milk (three times), electricity, stamp duty, guideline value, excise duty, outpatient fees in government hospitals, post-mortem examination charges, medical certificate fees, lab test charges, professional tax and seed prices. This is the price hike demon Congress government," he said. *—PTI*

UNITED IN WORSHIP

Muslims attend prayer and greet each other during Eid Ul Fitr at Mysore Road Eidgah Maidan in Bengaluru

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD

Ranya Rao moves HC for bail

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

Kannada actress Ranya Rao approached the Karnataka High Court on Tuesday for bail after her plea was rejected by three subordinate courts one after another in the gold smuggling case. Her advocate B S Girish filed the bail petition in the HC.

On 27 March, the 64th CCH Sessions Court in Bengaluru rejected her bail plea, following an earlier denial by the Special Court for Economic Offences on 14 March. Prior to this, the Magistrate Court refused her bail request, citing the gravity of the charges against her.

During a previous hearing, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) informed the court that Ranya Rao had admitted to purchasing gold illegally using hawala money.

She was arrested on 3 March at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru with 14.8 kg of gold. *—PTI*

3 held for honeytrap, extortion of city man

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

The City Crime Branch (CCB) sleuths have arrested a school teacher and two associates including a rowdy-sheeter for setting up a honeytrap to extort money from a businessman in the city.

The trio has been identified as rowdy-sheeter Ganesh Kale and Sagar More from Vijayapura and Shruti, a private preschool teacher in Bengaluru.

According to the police, Shruti met the businessman in 2023. Over time, they became close and Shruti borrowed Rs 2 lakh from him. When he asked her to return his money, she offered him partnership in her school.

The businessman and Shruti spent time together at various places. She also took another Rs 50,000 from him. In January 2025, she allegedly suggested a live-in relationship in lieu of the money she took from him.

Shruti then took another Rs 15 lakh from him and kept on demanding money. When he tried to end the relationship, Shruti called his wife on 12 March, asking her to send him to the school.

When the man went to the school, Kale and More kidnapped him and demanded Rs 1 crore. They threatened to expose him before his family and kidnap his wife. Eventually, they settled for Rs 20 lakh and the duo collected Rs 1.9 lakh before releasing him. On 17 March, Shruti demanded another Rs 15 lakh. The businessman finally approached the CCB. *—Salar News*

Won't stop volunteers from temple revamp: RSS

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

In a recent interview, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale expressed that the organisation will not prevent its volunteers from participating in efforts to restore the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and the Srikrishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura. However, he noted the "futility" of attempting to unearth temples believed to be beneath mosques, warning that this could exacerbate societal tensions.

Hosabale underscored that while exploring historical grievances, society risks neglecting pressing issues like eliminating untouchability and preserving cultural values. He highlighted current challenges, including conversions, cow slaughter, and "love jihad," asserting these should remain a priority.

He clarified that the RSS was not the initiator of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement but supported it after discussions with religious leaders who sought their backing.

On the topic of casteism, Hosabale stated that caste must not be used as a tool for discrimination or to wield political power. He reiterated the RSS's commitment to the idea of 'Akhand Bharat', stressing that true unity extends beyond geography and requires a strong, organised Hindu society within India. *—PTI*

Suicide or murder? Police investigate woman's death

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

Police have detained a man for questioning regarding the suspicious death of his wife, 44-year-old Hema, in Nanjappa Layout, Adugodi. The incident, which surfaced on Saturday, has raised concerns about rising crime in the city.

Hema's family alleges she had claimed her husband had an extramarital affair, even providing accommodation for another woman nearby. In January, Hema reportedly attempted suicide by ingesting poison, with disputes escalating between the couple thereafter. Her family now alleges these conflicts may have culminated in her murder.

During police questioning, her husband contended that she took her own life due to worries about their daughter's education. However, no witnesses saw her in a hanging position. Following an examination of her body at the hospital, family members expressed suspicions of foul play. An investigation is ongoing. *—Salar News*

KANNADA FIRST

Governor releases engineering books translated into Kannada

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Tuesday unveiled a collection of engineering books translated into Kannada, aimed at promoting technical education in regional languages.

The books, designed for first-year engineering and diploma courses, were released at an event organised by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) at Raj Bhavan, Bengaluru.

Gehlot praised the initiative, highlighting the importance of education in the mother tongue for fostering intellectual growth, creativity, and better understanding. He noted that countries like Germany, Japan, and China impart technical education in their native languages, contributing to their progress. He also emphasised that the National Education Policy encourages regional languages as the medium of instruction to make education more inclusive.

The Governor further acknowledged AICTE's role in spearheading the translation project, with VTU serving as the nodal centre for Kannada translations. Higher Education Minister MC Sudhakar expressed support for the initiative, stating that offering technical education in regional languages would improve accessibility and innovation. This milestone is a joint effort between AICTE and VTU. *—PTI*

Bengaluru airport's website now in Kannada

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) has introduced a Kannada language option on its website, enhancing accessibility for travellers. This new feature allows users to navigate airport services with ease, catering to those who prefer the state's native language.

Hari Marar, Managing Director & CEO of BIAL, said the move it aims to create a more inclusive experience for customers seeking information in Kannada.

The website now includes real-time flight updates as well as FAQs in Kannada. Marar also highlighted the the presence of multilingual signage, public announcements and assistance from airport staff in Kannada throughout the facility. *—PTI*

Cops bust gang of bank robbers, seize 17 kg gold

DAVANGERE, 1 APRIL

The Karnataka police have busted a six-member gang of robbers and recovered 17.7 kg of stolen gold, officials said on Monday. The gold was stolen from the Nyamati branch of the State Bank of India in Davangere on 28 October, 2024.

Police said the stolen locker with gold ornaments was recovered from a well in Usalampatti town of Madurai district in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

The accused have been identified as Vijaykumar, 30, his brother Ajaykumar, 28, Abhisheka, 23, Chandru, 23, Manjunath, 32, and Paramananda, 30, police said.

"Vijaykumar and Ajaykumar are brothers while Paramanda is their brother-in-law. All three hail from Tamil Nadu but have had a sweets business in Nyamati for many years. The other three accused, Abhisheka, Chandru and Manjunath are from Nyamati," police said. *—PTI*

TO BEAT THE RUSH

BMTC, traffic police join forces to ease commute during IPL

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has announced reliable and affordable transport services for spectators attending the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 T20 Cricket matches at M Chinnaswamy Stadium. The BMTC will operate special buses from the stadium to various destinations on the days of the matches.

The Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) has also announced special traffic arrangements in view of the upcoming IPL matches at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Traffic restrictions will be enforced from 3pm to 12am on the days of the match, which include 2, 10, 18 and 24 April as well as 3, 13 and 17 May.

During the match hours, parking will be strictly prohibited on Queens Road, MG Road, Cubbon Road, Raj Bhavan Road, Central Street, St Marks Road, Museum Road, Kasturba Road, Ambedkar Veedi, Trinity Junction, Lavelle Road, Vittal Mallya Road, Kings Road and Nrupathunga Road.

Parking spaces have been arranged at St Joseph's Indian School ground, UB City parking lot, BMTC TTMC Shivajinagar, Old KGID building, Kings Way inside Cubbon Park and the basement of St Joseph's Boys High School. *—Salar News & Agencies*

METRO EXTENDS TIMINGS

Meanwhile, Namma Metro announced on Tuesday that it would extend the timings on match days. "The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited is extending its train services until 12.30 am from Whitefield (Kadugodi), Challaghatta, Silk Institute and Madavara. The last train from Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Station Majestic towards all four directions will leave at 1.15 am," it said in a statement.

SPRCIAL BUSES AND ROUTES

BUS	ROUTES
SBS-1K	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to Kadugodi Bus Station (HAL Road)
G-2	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to Sarjapura
G-3	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to Electronic City (Hosur Road
G-4	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to Bannerghatta National Park
G-7	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to Janapriya Township (Magadi Road
G-10	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to R K Hegde Nagar, Yelahanka (Nagavara, Tannery Road)
317 G	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to Hosakote
13	From M Chinnaswamy Stadium to Banashankari

RS passes Protection of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed The Protection of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill, 2025, which seeks to give legal effect to certain international agreements in their application to India with Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu asserting that it will partly help in bring down airfares. The bill seeks to give legal effect to certain international agreements in their application to India, which includes the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment (also known as Cape Town Convention of 2001) and Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Aircraft Equipment. India had acceded to these in 2008. *—PTI*

AFSPA extended to one more district in Nagaland

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

The Centre on Tuesday imposed for six months the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Nagaland's Meluri district, two days after the law was extended to eight districts and 21 police station areas in five other districts of the state. In a notification, the Union home ministry said in November, 2024, the district of Meluri had been carved out of Phek district, which has been declared a 'disturbed area' on March 30, along with seven other districts. The AFSPA, often criticised as a draconian law, gives armed forces operating in disturbed areas immunity and sweeping powers to search, arrest and open fire if they deem it necessary. *—PTI*

'Most Naxal-hit districts' down from 12 to 6: Shah

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

The country has achieved a milestone by reducing the number of districts most affected by Leftwing Extremism from 12 to six, Union Home Minister Amit Shah declared on Tuesday. The Narendra Modi government is building a "Sashakt, Surakshit and Samriddh Bharat" with a ruthless approach to Naxalism and relentless efforts for all-pervasive development, Shah said adding Naxalism will be uprooted by 31 March next year. The affected districts have been further sub-categorised as 'most-affected districts', a terminology introduced in 2015, and 'districts of concern' -- coined by the ministry in 2021. The 'most-affected districts' comprise of four are in Chhattisgarh and one each in Jharkhand and Maharashtra . *—PTI*

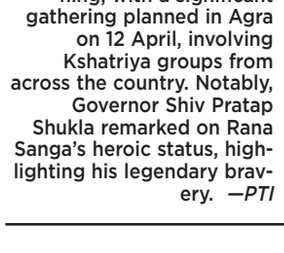


PHOTO: PTI

Protests erupt over MP's remarks on Rana Sanga in HP

SHIMLA, 1 APRIL

The Devbhoomi Kshatriya Samaj, a prominent organisation from Himachal Pradesh, staged a protest against Samajwadi Party MP Ramji Lal Suman following his controversial comments about the historical figure Rana Sanga. Demonstrators burnt the MP's effigy outside the Himachal Pradesh Secretariat, chanting slogans and clashing with police. Organisation president Rumit Singh Thakur stated, "We are here to honour our warriors. Those lacking a grasp of history and geography should not make disparaging remarks about our brave figures." Thakur announced that this protest is merely the beginning, with a significant gathering planned in Agra on 12 April, involving Kshatriya groups from across the country. Notably, Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla remarked on Rana Sanga's heroic status, highlighting his legendary bravery. *—PTI*

Leaders enraged over Yunus' Northeast 'landlocked' jibe

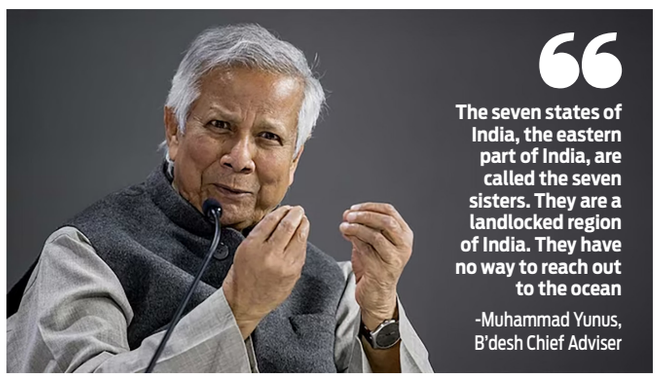
Himanta criticises Yunus; Cong slams 'weakened' foreign policy

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

The recent comments made by Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on India's northeastern states drew sharp reactions from political leaders across party lines on Tuesday, dubbing his remarks as "shameful" and "provocative".

Congress leader Pawan Khera on Monday shared a video clip on X of Yunus, in which he claimed that Bangladesh was the sole "guardian of the ocean (Bay of Bengal)," as India's northeastern states were "landlocked". "This attitude of the Bangladesh government is very dangerous for the security of our North East region. The government is not taking care of Manipur and China has already settled villages in Arunachal," Khera wrote in Hindi on X.

"It's very important that we see China as our good friend,"


The seven states of India, the eastern part of India, are called the seven sisters. They are a landlocked region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean
-Muhammad Yunus, B'desh Chief Adviser

Yunus apparently made the comment during his recent four-day visit to China. A video of it surfaced on social media on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Yunus said, projecting Beijing as a balancing factor against New Delhi.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma described Yunus's remarks as "offensive and strongly condemnable" and called for prioritisation of exploring alternative routes connecting the Northeast to the rest of India, bypassing the 'Chicken's Neck'.

Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh asked Yunus to not make reckless comments about India as it is "not only unwise but also lead to consequences". On Monday, Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Debbarma said letting go of the Chittagong port in present-day Bangladesh in 1947 was India's "biggest mistake", and made a pitch for a route to the ocean with the support of "indigenous people".

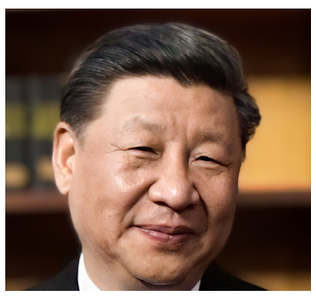
A former ambassador of India described the comments as "most unfortunate," though he said that New Delhi should not panic over Yunus' statements.

"It doesn't change the reality of what India is today and what it is capable of...(India is) fully capable of protecting its security concerns," Venu Rajamony, who served as India's ambassador to the Netherlands from 2017 to 2020, told PTI.

When asked about its impact on India-Bangladesh ties, Rajamony said, "On bilateral ties trajectory, there is no indication of any major shift in Bangladesh's policy towards India." *—PTI*

Xi calls for elephant and dragon tango

BEIJING, 1 APRIL



Xi Jinping. *PHOTO: PTI*

In a message commemorating the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasised the need for India and China to partner for "mutual achievement," advocating for a "dragon-elephant tango" that serves both countries' fundamental interests. This sentiment was echoed in congratulatory messages exchanged between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese Premier Li Qiang, as reported by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

In her response, Indian President Droupadi Murmu highlighted the significance of a stable, predictable, and friendly relationship, emphasising that such ties would greatly benefit both nations and the global community.

Xi described the relationship as pivotal for both countries, which are major developing nations and significant representatives of the Global South. He called for strategic approaches to enhance mutual trust, cooperation across various sectors, and peaceful coexistence, while also stressing the importance of maintaining tranquillity along their border.

Murmu reiterated the potential for sound development in bilateral relations, suggesting that the 75th anniversary should be used as a platform to promote positive engagements. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun added that both nations are keen to advance their partnership further, following a series of recent high-level meetings aimed at normalising relationships after tensions related to the Ladakh standoff. *—PTI*

'Roads for traffic not namaz'

LUCKNOW, 1 APRIL

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has defended his administration's warning to Muslims against offering namaz on streets, saying roads are meant for the movement of traffic. He also told Muslims to learn religious discipline from Hindus who took part in the massive Maha Kumbh mela without any incident of crime, destruction or harassment.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, Adityanath slammed critics of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

He said Waqf boards have become a den of selfish interests as well as "loot khasot" (property grabbing), and have done little for the welfare of Muslims.

Citing examples of charity in fields like education and health by Hindu temples and mutts, he asked if any Waqf board has done welfare work like this despite having properties many times more. Forget about the entire society, have Waqf properties been used for any welfare of Muslims, he asked.

He said, "It (Waqf) has become a medium to capture any government property. This reform is the need of the hour, and all reforms draw opposition. I believe Muslims will benefit from this (proposed law)."

Amidst Supreme Court's remarks against bulldozer action, Adityanath told PTI that he did not consider the popular practice as an achievement but a necessity. The bulldozer can be used to create infrastructure and remove encroachments as well, he said. "It seems to me that we have shown how it can be used in a better way." *—PTI*

YOGI PLAYS DOWN PM ASPIRATION

LUCKNOW, 1 APRIL

Politics is not a full-time job for him and he remains a Yogi at heart, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, dismissing speculation about him becoming the prime minister in the future.

In an interview with PTI, Adityanath said his primary role is serving the people of Uttar Pradesh, as entrusted by his party.

"I am the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, and the party has placed me here to serve the people of the state," he said.

"Politics is not a full-time job for me. Ultimately, I am a Yogi (monk) at heart."

On how long he plans to remain in politics, the chief minister said, "There will be a time frame for this as well." *—PTI*

MURDER PLOT ORDER

US court rejects Pannun's claim against NSA Doval

NEW YORK, 1 APRIL

A US court has said that no complaint was delivered to National Security Advisor Ajit Doval during his visit to Washington in February, dismissing a claim by Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun that court documents, including a summons, had been served on the top Indian official.

Pannun has filed a civil lawsuit against Doval and another Indian national Nikhil Gupta.

Gupta has been accused by federal prosecutors of working with an Indian government employee in a foiled plot to kill Pannun on American soil.

Pannun claimed in court papers that when Doval was in Washington, accompanying Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the visit to meet US President Donald Trump on February 12-13, he had "hired two process servers and one investigator" to serve the complaint on the National Security Advisor (NSA). In the first instance, attempt was made on February 12 to deliver the complaint to Doval at Blair House, the President's Guest House where Modi and his delegation were staying during the DC visit but the agent refused to accept documents.

The next day, on February 13, another individual attempted to serve the documents on Doval but was stopped by sergeant at the checkpoint. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

YSRCP WRITES TO PM OVER TIRUMALA

TIRUPATI, 1 APRIL

The YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP on Tuesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address the al-leged multiple security lapses at Lord Venkateshwara temple on Tirumala hill.

In a letter to the PM, the YSRCP's Tirupati Lok Sabha MP M Gurumoorthy stressed the urgent need to ad-dress "security lapses at Tirumala", highlighting concerns over inadequate measures that allegedly jeopard-ise the safety of devotees and the sanctity of the temple, requesting immediate action on the issue.

"The failure of the present TTD administration to establish a structured and well-coordinated security framework is placing millions of devotees at risk." said the letter.

Given Tirumala's unparalleled significance as one of the holiest pilgrimage sites in the country, this matter demands urgent national-level attention, it added.

The MP also pointed out the lack of coordination among agencies, unauthorised entry of prohibited items, and security breaches at Alipiri and the Papavinasanam dam call for corrective measures to ensure the safety and sanctity of the temple.

The MP further said that the absence of a dedicated security head and poor coordination among multiple agencies had exacerbated the situation. YSRCP called for immediate corrective actions to ensure the safety of millions of devotees and to preserve the temple's sanctity. *—PTI*

CAG flags lapses in Delhi pollution control

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

- The Delhi government has been slow to deregister overage vehicles, with only 2.98 lakh out of 47.51 lakh needing removal being decommissioned.

A recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has unveiled significant lapses in pollution control mechanisms contributing to Delhi's deteriorating air quality. Presented in the Assembly by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, the report criticises irregularities in Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates, citing over 1,08,000 vehicles certified despite exceeding carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon limits.

Between 2015 and 2020, around 4,000 diesel vehicles with excessive emissions remained on the roads due to compliance certificates. Moreover, the Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS) failed to meet Central Pollution Control Board standards, raising doubts about air quality data accuracy.

The Delhi government has been slow to deregister overage vehicles, with only 2.98 lakh out of 47.51 lakh needing removal being decommissioned. Inadequate enforcement remains a major challenge, with insufficient staff and equipment hampering monitoring efforts.

The report also criticises the government's failure to develop new Inter-State Bus Terminals as ordered by the Supreme Court over two decades ago, exacerbating pollution from diesel buses navigating the city. Overall, it highlights a need for better monitoring, stricter measures, and enhanced public awareness to tackle the pollution crisis effectively. *—PTI*

COGNIZABLE OFFENCE FOUND

Court directs FIR against Kapil Mishra in 2020 Delhi riots

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

In a significant development, a court has ordered an FIR to investigate Delhi Law Minister Kapil Mishra's alleged involvement in the 2020 riots in the national capital. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Vaibhav Chaurasia determined that there was a "prime facie" cognisable offence, necessitating a probe into Mishra and others.

The court emphasised Mishra's presence in the area during the riots and instructed Delhi Police to submit a "compliance report" by 16 April, which will be the next hearing date. A detailed order is pending.

The violence in northeast Delhi erupted on 24 February, 2020, amid protests against the controversial citizenship law, resulting in 53 deaths and numerous injuries. The application for the FIR was lodged by Mohammad Ilyas, a resident of Yamuna Vihar, despite opposition from Delhi Police, who claimed Mishra had no involvement.

Kapil Mishra. *PHOTO: PTI*

- The violence in northeast Delhi erupted on 24 February, 2020, amid protests against the controversial citizenship law.

Additionally, a public interest litigation (PIL) regarding the alleged hate speeches by Mishra and other BJP leaders prior to the riots is currently on hold in the Delhi High Court. The police previously indicated that efforts were being made to "shift the blame" onto Mishra, stating that evidence showed plans for unrest were made well ahead of time.

Ilyas's FIR specifically targets Mishra, the then SHO of Dayalpur, and five other individuals, including BJP MLA Mohan Singh Bisht. *—PTI*

COPS DENY REPORT

Kamra fumes as cops 'summon' audience

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, 1 APRIL

Comedian Kunal Kamra on Tuesday shared a five-point post on X titled "How to Kill an Artist: A Step-by-Step Guide" in which he criticised the violent outrage against his recent show and said artists can either sell their soul or wither in silence.

There were reports that audience members who attended Kamra's show were sent notice to appear before the police. However, a police official denied that this was so.

Kamra's video "Naya Bharat", released on his YouTube channel last week, led to massive political controversy over his traitor comment seen to be against Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Shiv Sainiks destroyed the venue where Kamra shot the comedy show. The stand-up comic faces three FIRs in Mumbai and is currently in Tamil Nadu. On Tuesday, he put out a post slamming the way he is being hounded by authorities.

"'How to Kill an Artist: A Step-by-Step Guide'

1) Outrage - just enough for brands to stop commissioning their work.

2) Outrage more- until private and corporate gigs dry up

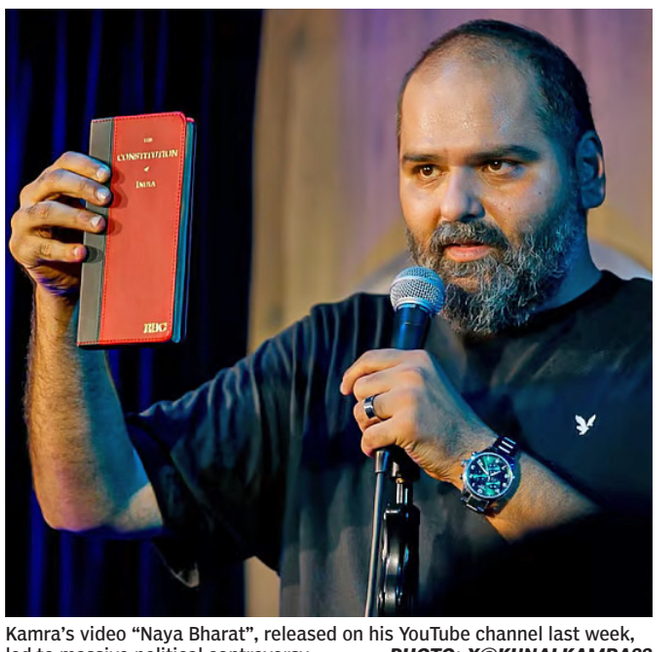
3) Outrage louder -so big venues won't take risk.

4) Outrage violently - until even the smallest spaces shut their doors

5) Summon their audience for questioning - turning art into a crime scene," he posted on X.

According to Kamra, an artist is left with only two choices under such circumstances. "Sell their soul and become a dollar puppet or wither in silence. This isn't just a playbook, it's a political weapon. A silencing machine," he wrote.

Kamra, known for his anti-establishment views, has refused to apologise for his over 40-minute video that has garnered over 11 million views. *—PTI*



Kamra's video "Naya Bharat", released on his YouTube channel last week, led to massive political controversy *PHOTO: X@KUNALKAMRA88*

India and Chile launch economic partnership

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

India and Chile have announced the commencement of negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chilean President Gabriel Boric Font. The discussions focused on enhancing cooperation in trade, defence, critical minerals, and health.

Modi described Chile as a vital "friend and partner" in Latin America and expressed optimism about future collaboration. "India and Chile may be geographically distant, but we share unique similarities," Modi remarked, adding that both nations could benefit from each other's capabilities in various sectors.

He highlighted the importance of mutual growth in trade and investment, citing untapped potential, and stated that both countries are set to establish resilient supply chains for critical minerals. The partnership will also aim to ensure food security through agricultural cooperation.

Modi noted the significance of defence collaboration, stating it exemplifies mutual trust, and discussed the need for cooperation to tackle issues like organised crime and terrorism.

At the global level, both leaders stressed the importance of dialogue in resolving tensions and called for reform of the United Nations Security Council.

They also agreed to simplify visa processes and enhance student exchanges between the two nations.

Modi concluded that Boric's visit has created "new energy and enthusiasm" in bilateral relations, paving the way for enhanced cooperation across the Latin American region. *—PTI*

T'gana clears 'forest' land amid protests

Congress government claims it owns 400 acres of land, eyes ₹15,000 crore in auction

HYDERABAD, 1 APRIL

Amid rising protests by the students of the University of Hyderabad (UoH), the Congress government in Telangana continued to clear the land in the Kancha Gachibowli village in the Rangareddy district.

It is believed that the auction of 400 acres of land is likely to fetch the government between Rs 10,000 crore and Rs 15,000 crore. The government, which insists that the land belongs to the state, wants to build world-class infrastructure, IT parks, improve urban connectivity and develop urban living space."The revenue records clearly said the land is not forest land as reported in a section of the media but rather owned by the government," the Chief Minister's Office said on Monday.

Earth movers levelling the ground on the land adjacent to University of Hyderabad **PHOTO: X**

The process of clearing the land was started on Sunday afternoon and more earthmovers were deployed Monday. According to UoH students, around 50 earthmovers were deployed to clear the forest.

"They worked overnight to destroy the ecosystem, even as a petition filed before the High Court demanding the entire 400 acres to be preserved as a national park is pending hearing on 7 April," said a student leader.

The Cyberabad police on Sunday detained more than 50 students for obstructing the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TIIC) from carrying out the work. The protesting students, citing a 2008–09joint-study by the UoH and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-India, said the area is home to over 455 species of flora and fauna.

Students to scale up stir

Meanwhile, the University of Hyderabad Students' Union (UoHSU) has announced an indefinite protest and boycott of classes from Tuesday, demanding the removal of police personnel and earth-moving machinery from the campus.

The union's vice president Akash said students and teachers were urged to join the protest on campus and boycott classes. In a joint statement, several students' associations accused the university administration of "betraying" the students by facilitating land clearing activities for the state government. They also condemned the "brutal police crackdown" on peaceful demonstrators.

The protesting students demanded a written assurance that the land would be formally registered under the university. *—Agencies*

Bomb threat mail sparks panic at museum in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 1 APRIL

A bomb threat triggered panic at the Indian Museum in Kolkata on Tuesday, prompting a thorough search operation by security personnel. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) notified the local police after receiving an email claiming that bombs would be planted in the museum. The museum was closed to visitors until a clearance was received from the police. A search of the museum's 51 rooms yielded no suspicious objects. As a precaution, the museum's perimeter was secured with guardrails. Onlookers speculated that the threat might be an April Fool's Day prank, but the authorities took no chances. The Indian Museum is a significant cultural institution in Kolkata. *—PTI*

Delhi HC's Justice Sharma shifted to Calcutta HC

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma has been transferred from the Delhi High Court to the Calcutta High Court, the law ministry announced on Tuesday. This move marks the third transfer of a Delhi High Court judge in recent days, following the relocations of Justices Yashwant Varma and Chandra Dhari Singh. Justice Sharma's transfer was recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium late last month. He has served as a high court judge since 2022, having previously held positions as District and Sessions Judge in New Delhi and Registrar (Vigilance) at the Delhi High Court. Justice Sharma's transfer has been met with interest, particularly given his relatively short tenure as a high court judge. *—PTI*

Vandal strikes at religious site in Maharashtra

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 1 APRIL

A mysterious vandal has targeted a religious structure in Maharashtra's Jalna district, prompting a police investigation. The incident occurred on Sunday at the Tara Shahwali Peershah dargah in Kirola, Badnapur. According to authorities, the perpetrator entered the dargah and vandalised the structure and flooring. The Badnapur police registered a case against the unidentified culprit on Sunday, invoking various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including damaging a place of worship and inciting religious enmity. The police are currently probing the incident, but no arrests have been made thus far. The motive behind the vandalism remains unclear, and authorities are working to identify the perpetrator and determine the circumstances surrounding the incident. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Bajinder Singh awarded life-term for raping woman

CHANDIGARH, 1 APRIL

A court in Mohali, Punjab, has sentenced self-styled preacher Bajinder Singh to life imprisonment for raping a woman in 2018. Singh, who referred to himself as the 'Yeshu Yeshu prophet', was found guilty of rape, causing hurt, and criminal intimidation. The victim alleged that Singh had lured her with promises of a trip abroad, before raping her at his residence in Mohali. He also filmed the act and threatened to make it public if she did not comply with his demands. Singh's sentencing follows a lengthy legal battle. He was initially arrested at Delhi airport in 2018 while attempting to flee to London, but was later granted bail. However, a non-bailable warrant was issued against him in March, and he has now been jailed for life. *—PTI*

FPI DISCLOSURES

SC directs TMC MP Moitra to approach Sebi

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked TMC MP Mahua Moitra to make a detailed representation to the Sebi on public disclosure of portfolio holdings of alternative investment funds and foreign portfolio investors (FPIs).

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma passed the order while hearing Moitra's plea for a direction to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to mandate public disclosure of ultimate beneficial owners and portfolio of alternative investment funds (AIFs), FPIs and their intermediaries in India.

While disposing of Moitra's plea, the bench said once such a representation would be made, the same be considered in accordance with law.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for Moitra, said the regulations of SEBI require normal mutual funds and other investors to disclose details about the investors and in which companies they were investing. "So far as these two categories (AIFs and FPIs) are concerned, no disclosure is required," he said.

Bhushan said recently, the SEBI said if one's assets under management were above Rs 50,000 crore, then they had to disclose who were the people to the board but not to the general public. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Will maintain decency in shows, Allahbadia tells SC

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia, known as BeerBiceps, has filed an undertaking in the Supreme Court pledging to maintain decency in his shows. His lawyer, Senior Advocate Abhinav Chandrachud, informed the court that Allahbadia had joined the investigation and sought modification of a condition requiring him to deposit his passport, which affects his ability to travel for interviews.

The court stated the investigation would likely conclude in two weeks, after which it would consider releasing his passport. Allahbadia was previously booked for controversial comments on a YouTube show, leading to interim protection from arrest *—PTI*

SC bins petition against mosque whitewashing

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected a plea challenging an Allahabad High Court order that asked the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to whitewash the Mughal-era Jama Masjid in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district. The Allahabad High Court had on March 12 asked the ASI to undertake and complete the whitewashing of the mosque within a week. "We are not inclined to entertain the present petition.

SC junks plea against Gandhi ashram revamp

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected a plea filed by Mahatma Gandhi's great-grandson Tushar Gandhi against the Sabarmati Ashram redevelopment. The bench said it will not entertain the plea, noting a two-year delay in filing the plea. Gandhi said in his plea, "The project has purportedly identified over 40 congruent buildings which will be preserved while the rest of them, roughly 200, will be destroyed or rebuilt."

REGULATORY VIOLATIONS

Bombay HC extends stay on FIR against former Sebi chairperson

MUMBAI, 1 APRIL

The Bombay High Court has extended an interim stay on a special court's directive for the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) against ex-Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five other officials linked to alleged stock market fraud and regulatory violations.

Last month, the HC granted the interim stay, emphasising that the special court's order failed to specify the roles of the accused. On Tuesday, Justice Shivkumar Dige acknowledged the original complainant, Sapan Shrivastava, had submitted an affidavit and permitted time for Buch and her co-accused to review it.

"The interim relief granted earlier shall continue until further orders," Justice Dige stated, scheduling the next hearing for 7 May.

The appeal had been filed by Buch, alongside current whole-time SEBI directors

Ashwani Bhatia, Ananth Narayan G, and Kamlesh Chandra Varshney, as well as Sundararaman Ramamurthy, Managing Director and CEO of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), and former BSE chairman Pramod Agarwal. They sought to quash the special court's order, which directed the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to pursue an FIR regarding allegations of fraud dating back to 1994, associated with the listing of a company on the BSE.

The special court had identified prima facie evidence warranting an impartial investigation into alleged regulatory failures and collusion. The petitioners contended that the order was "manifestly erroneous, patently illegal and issued without jurisdiction". *—PTI*

Public interest outweighs right to reputation: HC

KOLKATA, 1 APRIL

The Calcutta High Court has dismissed a defamation case by an educational institution's superintendent against over 280 individuals who submitted a mass petition to the Chief Minister. The HC said the case involved public interest that outweighed the right to personal reputation.

Justice Ajay Kumar Gupta ruled that the complainant failed to provide sufficient evidence. The court said, "The mass complaint, filed against the complainant by 287 individuals, is privileged in nature as it pertains to a matter of public interest."

The petition, addressed to the West Bengal Chief Minister, accused the superintendent of engaging in illegal activities at the institution, which was founded by a freedom fighter in the former Bardhaman district. Petitioners sought an inquiry and action to safeguard the students and the school.

PHOTO: PTI

The high court concluded that the mass petition aimed to protect the institution and its students, reiterating that it should not be viewed as malicious or reputational harm. *—PTI*

MP government bans liquor in 19 religious places

BHOPAL, 1 APRIL

A comprehensive ban on alcoholic beverages has been implemented across 19 religious cities and specific gram panchayats in Madhya Pradesh, including Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, and Maihar. This ban took effect on Tuesday, as confirmed by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, who hailed it as a "historic step towards de-addiction."

The decision, initially announced by the CM and subsequently approved by the cabinet on 24 January during a meeting in Maheshwar—associated with the revered queen Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar—prohibits all liquor shops and bars within the urban limits of Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Mandleshwar, Orchha, Maihar, Chitrakoot, Datia, Panna, Mandla, Multai, Mandsaur, and Amarkantak. It also extends to gram panchayat areas such as Salkanpur, Kundalpur, Bandakpur, Barmankalan, Barmankhurd, and Linga.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has declared these 19 areas "completely sacred," highlighting the significance of public faith and religious reverence in the decision.

Key religious sites include the renowned Mahakal Temple in Ujjain and Amarkantak, the birthplace of the Narmada River, which holds immense importance for the state. *—PTI*

Report: 13,000 sq km of forest land encroached in 25 states

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Over 13,000 sq km of forest area, more than the total geographical area of Delhi, Sikkim, and Goa combined, is under encroachment in 25 states and Union Territories that have submitted data to the Union Environment Ministry so far. Ten states are yet to submit data.

Last year, the National Green Tribunal took suo motu cognisance of media reports that cited government data showing that 7,50,648 hectares (or 7,506.48 sq km) of forest area more than five times the size of Delhi was under encroachment in India.

PHOTO: PTI

In a report submitted to the NGT last week, the ministry said that as of March 2024, a total of 13,05,668.1 hectares (or 13,056 sq km) of forest area was under encroachment in 25 states and UTs that have provided data so far. Madhya Pradesh had the highest forest encroachment among all states and UTs, with 5,460.9 sq km affected as of March 2024 followed by Assam - 3,620.9 sq km, Karnataka 853.08 sq km, 575.54 sq km in Maharashtra under encroachment.

Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, Telangana, West Bengal, Nagaland, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have not submitted the report. Forest area or the Recorded Forest Area (RFA) includes land officially designated as forest by the government, even if it does not have tree cover. *—PTI*

German woman accuses Hyderabad cabby of rape

HYDERABAD, 1 APRIL

A 22-year-old German national has alleged that she was sexually assaulted by a taxi driver in Hyderabad after accepting a ride from him. According to police reports, the woman filed a complaint stating that the driver raped her in the rear seat of the taxi late on Monday evening.

Officers registered a case of rape and arranged for the victim to undergo a medical examination. A police official confirmed that the driver was taken into custody for questioning shortly thereafter.

The victim, who travelled to Hyderabad with a fellow German national on 4 March to visit a friend, was sightseeing when she was raped. On the evening of the alleged assault, she and her friend accepted a lift from the driver, who already had other passengers in the car. Her friend exited the vehicle before reaching the Mamidipally area on the outskirts of the city. The woman then remained in the taxi with the driver to take photographs at around 7.30pm.

Subsequently, she informed her friend that she had been raped. *—PTI*

GODHRA LINKS REMOVED

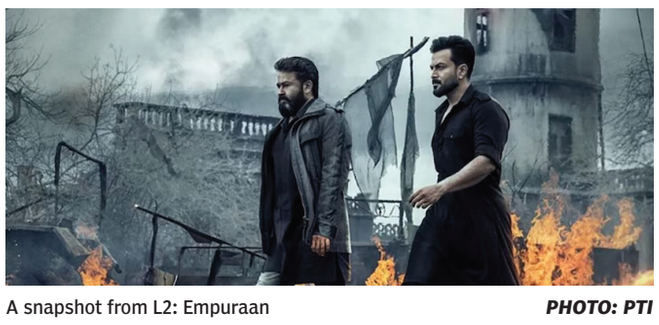
Empuraan to return pruned & polished

T'PURAM, 1 APRIL

Mohanlal-starrer 'L2: Empuraan' will hit the screens with 'voluntary modifications' suggested by its makers by Wednesday, deleting many scenes which directly link the storyline to the Godhra riots.

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has endorsed the screening of the movie with the modifications and the filmmakers are in the final stages of the editing and mastering works, after which it will be uploaded to theatres, sources said.

The regional office of the CBFC here, after a special meeting on Sunday, endorsed the cuts proposed by the producers and issued a fresh certificate. As per the new certificate, there are cuts or changes in 24 scenes which had direct links with the communal riots. Visuals with a total duration of two minutes and eight seconds have been deleted from the original movie.



A snapshot from L2: Empuraan **PHOTO: PTI**

The card mentioning the period as '2002-India' has been replaced with 'A few years ago' in the new version.

Four scenes showing violence against women during the riots have been deleted. The name of the villain character of the movie, who is shown as fomenting communal violence, has been changed from 'Bajrangi' to Baldev, which has to be re-dubbed in several scenes.

Besides this, the 'thanks card' at the beginning of the movie attributed to Union Minister and actor Suresh Gopi has been removed.

The new version also will not have scenes showing vehicles moving in front of religious structures at four places and several visuals and dialogues of short duration by the villain character in the film.

The scene showing the car with the name board of 'NIA' has been removed and an audio with the mention of the agency muted. *—PTI*

Can't curb rights of OCI cardholder arbitrarily: HC

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

- The principles of natural justice, the judge said, were embedded and are part of the statutory procedure envisaged for cancelling the registration of an overseas citizen of India cardholder

Rights of an overseas citizen of India holding a valid OCI card cannot be curtailed arbitrarily, the Delhi High Court has said while ruling that the deportation and blacklisting of an OCI card holder, involved in alleged unauthorised missionary activities in Nagaland and other northeastern states, did not follow the statutory process.

Justice Sachin Datta said John Robert Roughton III ought to have been given an effective opportunity to address the allegations, as he directed the Centre to serve a show cause notice to him before passing a speaking order on the issue after duly considering his response.

The principles of natural justice, the judge said, were embedded and are part of the statutory procedure envisaged for cancelling the registration of an overseas citizen of India cardholder. "In the present case, the petitioner has not been granted an opportunity to be heard, and has also not been informed about the grounds for his deportation/blacklisting." *—PTI*

RELAXING AFTER DISASTER

A man sits on a chair checks his mobile phone at the site where an Israeli airstrike hit a building in Dahiyeh, a southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon
PHOTO: PTI

India looks on as China & Bangladesh better ties

Bangladesh's interim government is expanding cooperation with Beijing as ties with neighboring India remain strained following the ouster of former leader Sheikh Hasina.

After meeting last week with the leader of Bangladesh's interim government, Muhammad Yunus, Chinese President Xi Jinping said Beijing is "willing to work with Bangladesh to push bilateral cooperation to a new level."

Yunus, an economist and Nobel laureate, became the chief adviser to Bangladesh's interim government after former leader Sheikh Hasina was forced to step down amid a popular student-led uprising in August 2024. Yunus' press secretary Shafiqul Alam quickly labelled the chief adviser's first foreign tour as a "grand success." Yunus came home from China having secured USD 2.1 billion in Chinese investments, loans and grants, his office said.

A major part of this is establishing a Chinese Industrial Economic Zone in Bangladesh, with nearly 30 Chinese companies having pledged USD 1 billion for the project, coming after Yunus urged more private Chinese investment in Bangladesh's manufacturing sector. China also plans to lend USD 400 million to modernize Bangladesh's second-largest port at Mongla. Beijing is considering enhanced cooperation in water resource management. And China again pledged to support Bangladesh in its effort to repatriate over a million Rohingya refugees currently living in crowded refugee camps after fleeing persecution in neighboring Myanmar.

Former diplomat Munshi Faiz Ahmad said Yunus's meeting with Xi was a positive sign for the interim government Jasmin Lorch, a senior researcher at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability, told DW that the visit harbors both benefits and risks for Bangladesh from a geostrategic perspective. "On the one hand, it contributes to further diversifying Bangladesh's international alliances, thereby reducing its reliance on India, with which relations have begun to deteriorate, as well as its reliance on the US, whose foreign policy has become more unreliable under President Donald Trump," she said.

Chief Adviser of Bangladesh Muhammad Yunus and Chinese President Xi Jinping in a meeting to expand cooperation ***PHOTO: PTI***

However, the expert added that Bangladesh increasing ties with China is "bound to anger India," as it brings Beijing's influence closer to its border. "Deepening cooperation with China in areas such as the modernization of Mongla port or, potentially, the Teesta River project, will strengthen Bangladesh's integration into China's Belt and Road Initiative, an integration India rejects," she added. Trade deficits are another issue on the table, as Bangladesh's exports, mostly textiles, to China amount to a fraction of the more than USD 23 billion in bilateral trade. China has offered a zero-tariff market access, which could open the door to more Bangladeshi products.

Analyst Lorch pointed out that from an economic and development perspective, enhancing ties with China is a "double-edged sword." "Moreover, the related infrastructure projects may entail serious environmental risks," she said.

Yunus took charge of Bangladesh after Hasina fled to India following her ouster. India had been the biggest benefactor of Hasina's government, and her departure sent cross-border relations into a tailspin, culminating in Yunus deciding to make his first state visit to China, rather than India. Yunus had reportedly wanted to visit India before traveling to China. Although India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has yet to meet Yunus, the Indian leader did recently send a letter to Bangladesh's leadership marking the country's Independence Day, lauding bilateral ties.

"This day stands as a testament to our shared history and sacrifices, that have laid the foundation of our bilateral partnership," Modi wrote to Yunus. "We remain committed to advancing this partnership, driven by our common aspirations for peace, stability, and prosperity, and based on mutual sensitivity to each other's interests and concerns."

"Anti-Indian sentiment has been rising in Bangladesh, owing to the Modi government's close relations with the former autocratic government of Sheikh Hasina and because the Modi government has not responded to Bangladesh's requests to extradite her for trial," said analyst Lorch. "Given the strong historical and cultural ties between the two countries, an easing of diplomatic relations would be essential, and Modi's recent letter to Yunus is hopefully an indication of that," she added.

However, Dhaka-based political commentator Zahid Ur Rahman doubts India will normalize relations with interim leader Yunus, whose government has said it is laying the groundwork for elections, for which a date has yet to be set.

"India wants to have a monopoly over Bangladesh, which was possible during former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's era. Bangladesh has adopted an independent foreign policy under Yunus, which is not influenced by New Delhi, and the Modi government doesn't like it," Rahman told DW.

Yunus has again sought a meeting with Modi in a bid to reset relations, with both leaders expected to be at an Asian economic summit in Bangkok later this week. Yunus' government has yet to receive a response, with Indian foreign minister S. Jaishankar saying the request was "under review." *– DW News*

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR سالار

April Fools' Day packs plenty of pranks

From France to Iceland to the US, April Fools' Day will be celebrated on Tuesday with practical jokes and elaborate hoaxes, so make sure to triple check viral posts and don't leave your back open to any stray sticky notes.

The jokesters' custom has been around for hundreds of years, although its exact birth is difficult to pinpoint. These days, depending on your location, it could be marked with a fish secretly pinned to someone's back or a whoopee cushion or even news reports of flying penguins. In the US, the pranks are typically followed by screams of "April Fools!" to make sure all are aware that they were the unsuspecting recipient of a practical joke.

Here are some thing to know about April Fools' Day and its history:

Where did April Fools' Day come from? There are plenty of theories about where this day of pranks and hoaxes came from. It's not clear exactly which one might be true. But what is clear is that April Fools' Day has roots stretching back hundreds of years. One idea is that it dates back to France in 1564, when King Charles IX moved the New Year celebration from its week-long observance beginning 25 March to a celebration on 1 January, according to the Library of Congress. Those who forgot or were never told about the change were mocked. Although the library notes that the true history of the New Year is more complicated, as different parts of the country observed it on different days.

A similar theory ties April Fools' Day to the 1582 change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, according to the library. But it explains that this type of origin story has been used to explain several holidays and may be more of a "migratory legend."

And then there's the theory that it could be connected to the 21 March vernal equinox, which is known as a day when people are tricked by unexpected weather changes, according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

Whatever its origin, the first time there was clear documented reference to the day was in 1561 when the Flemish writer Eduard De Dene wrote in his poem about a nobleman sending his servant on pointless tasks, according to the Library of Congress. The servant soon realises that he has been "sent on fool's errands' because it's 1 April," the library states. In 2021, then-first lady Jill Biden pretended to be a flight attendant on an airplane traveling from California to Washington. She wore a "Jasmine" nametag and passed out Dove ice cream bars while wearing a black mask, black pantsuit and wig. A few minutes later, "Jasmine" reemerged without the wig — revealing herself to be Jill Biden, laughing and proclaiming, "April Fools!"

Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin became known for announcing outlandish ideas every April Fools' Day soon after starting their company more than a quarter century ago. One year, Google posted a job opening for a Copernicus research center on the moon. Another year, the company said it planned to roll out a "scratch and sniff" feature on its search engine.

In 1992, NPR's "Talk of the Nation" program announced that former-President Richard Nixon, who resigned in 1974, would be running for president, according to the Museum of Hoaxes. A comedian had impersonated Nixon to say, "I never did anything wrong, and I won't do it again."

Outside of the US, one of the most notable pranks involved the BBC World Service in 1980 declaring that Big Ben would become a digital clock and renamed Digital Dave, according to the UK Parliament.

From Scotland to Iceland to the US, the day is honoured in a wide array of ways. In France, the day is known as poisson d'avril, or "April Fish," and has long had a fish-themed pranking tradition. In modern times, it's become more of a day for children to relish in attaching paper fish to their friends' backs, Atlas Obscura says. In Scotland, April Fools' has a history of being a two-day event. 1 April is known as "Gowkie Day" or "Hunt the Gowk," explained Encyclopedia Britannica. Gowk is a term used to describe a fool. On 2 April, the celebration may become more physical, with children attaching "kick me" signs to people's backs.

The day is also celebrated in Iceland, with the aim being to get people to "hlaupa apríl," or "make an April run." In other words, to trick someone in a way that makes them travel to a different location. News agencies have also been known to participate in pranking people. In 2014, for example, Iceland Review ran a story with the headline, "Google Signs Deal with Iceland," saying the fake news was part of "a long-standing tradition of the Icelandic media." *– PTI*

The pranks are typically followed by screams of 'April Fools!' to make sure all are aware that they were the unsuspecting recipient of a practical joke ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

Gaia, the most successful space telescope ceases operation

On Thursday 27 March, the European Space Agency (ESA) sent its last messages to the Gaia Spacecraft. They told Gaia to shut down its communication systems and central computer and said goodbye to this amazing space telescope.

Gaia has been the most successful ESA space mission ever, so why did they turn Gaia off? What did Gaia achieve? And perhaps most importantly, why was it my favourite space telescope?

Running on empty, Gaia was retired for a simple reason: after more than 11 years in space, it ran out of the cold gas propellant it needed to keep scanning the sky.

The telescope did its last observation on 15 January 2025. The ESA team then performed testing for a few weeks, before telling Gaia to leave its home at a point in space called L2 and start orbiting the Sun away from Earth.

L2 is one of five "Lagrangian points" around Earth and the Sun where gravitational conditions make for a nice, stable orbit. L2 is located 1.5 million kilometres from Earth on the "dark side", opposite the Sun.

L2 is a highly prized location because it's a stable spot to orbit, it's close enough to Earth for easy communication, and spacecraft can use the Sun behind them for solar power while looking away from the Sun out into space.

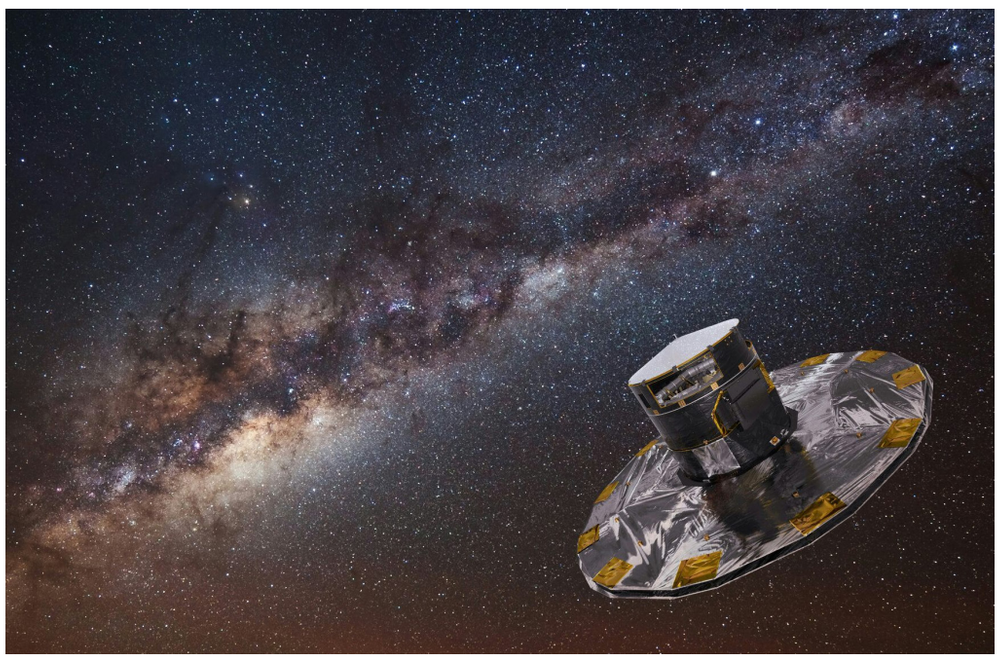
It's also too far away from Earth to send anyone on a repair mission, so once your spacecraft gets there it's on its own.

L2 currently hosts the James Webb Space Telescope, operated by the USA, Europe and Canada, the European Euclid mission, the Chinese Chang'e 6 orbiter and the joint Russian-German Spektr-RG observatory. Since L2 is such a key location for space missions, it's essential to keep it clear of debris and retired spacecraft.

Gaia used its thrusters for the last time to push itself away from L2, and is now drifting around the Sun in a "retirement orbit" where it won't get in anybody's way. As part of the retirement process, the Gaia team wrote farewell messages into the craft's software and sent it the names of around 1,500 people who worked on Gaia over the years.

What is Gaia? Gaia looks a bit like a spinning top hat in space. Its main mission was to produce a detailed, three-dimensional map of our galaxy, the Milky Way.

To do this, it measured the precise positions and motions of 1.46 billion objects in space. Gaia also measured brightnesses and variability and those data were used to provide temperatures, gravitational parameters, stellar types and more for millions of stars. One of the key pieces of information Gaia provided was the distance to millions of stars.



European Space Agency told Gaia to shut down its communication systems, central computer and said goodbye to this amazing space telescope ***PHOTO: ESO/S. BRUNIER***

- Gaia was retired for a simple reason: after more than 11 years in space, it ran out of the cold gas propellant it needed to keep scanning the sky.

A cosmic measuring tape

I'm a radio astronomer, which means I use radio telescopes here on Earth to explore the Universe. Radio light is the longest wavelength of light, invisible to human eyes, and I use it to investigate magnetic stars.

But even though I'm a radio astronomer and Gaia was an optical telescope, looking at the same wavelengths of light our eyes can see, I use Gaia data almost every single day.

I used it today to find out how far away, how bright, and how fast a star was. Before Gaia, I would probably never have known how far away that star was. This is essential for figuring out how bright the stars I study really are, which helps me understand the physics of what's happening in and around them.

A huge success

Gaia has contributed to thousands of articles in astronomy journals. Papers released by the Gaia collaboration have been cited well over 20,000 times in total. Gaia has produced too many science results to share here. To take just one example, Gaia improved our understanding of the structure of our own galaxy by showing that it has multiple spiral arms that are less sharply defined than we previously thought.

Not really the end for Gaia

It's difficult to express how revolutionary Gaia has been for astronomy, but we can let the numbers speak for themselves. Around five astronomy journal articles are published every day that use Gaia data, making Gaia the most successful ESA mission ever. And that won't come to a complete stop when Gaia retires.

The Gaia collaboration has published three data releases so far. This is where the collaboration performs the processing and checks on the data, adds some important analysis and releases all of that in one big hit.And luckily, there are two more big data releases with even more information to come. The fourth data release is expected in mid to late 2026. The fifth and final data release, containing all of the Gaia data from the whole mission, will come out sometime in the 2030s.

This article is my own small tribute to a telescope that changed astronomy as we know it. So I will end by saying a huge thank you to everyone who has ever worked on this amazing space mission, whether it was engineering and operations, turning the data into the amazing resource it is, or any of the other many jobs that make a mission successful.

And thank you to those who continue to work on the data as we speak. Finally, thank you to my favourite space telescope. Goodbye, Gaia, I'll miss you. *— PTI*

PHOTO: X

Minnesota University student's visa revoked

MINNEAPOLIS, 1 APRIL

A University of Minnesota graduate student who was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement was taken into custody because of a drunken driving infraction, not for being involved in protests, federal officials said on Monday. "The individual in question was arrested after a visa revocation by the State Department related to a prior criminal history for a DUI." News of the student's detention — and the lack of an official explanation — sparked student protests and expressions of concern from university and political leaders. Gov Tim Walz told reporters Monday that he spoke with Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem about it Friday and was still waiting for further details. Meanwhile, officials at Minnesota State University Mankato said Monday that one of their students had been detained by ICE as well. *—PTI*

Iceland evacuates over fear of volcanic eruption

LONDON, 1 APRIL

Authorities evacuated a town and the Blue Lagoon spa in southwestern Iceland on Tuesday as a volcano threatened to erupt for the eighth time. Magma began flowing at a volcano near the town of Grindavik, where some 40 homes have been evacuated, national broadcaster RUV said. The community, located on the Reykjanes Peninsula, was evacuated last year when the volcano became active after lying dormant for 800 years. The magma flow was accompanied by an intense earthquake storm similar to previous eruptions, the Icelandic Met Office said. "No magma has reached the surface as of now, but an eruption is likely to occur," the office said. *—PTI*

S Korea's court to rule on Yoon's impeachment

SEOUL, 1 APRIL

South Korea's Constitutional Court will rule on Friday on whether to formally dismiss or reinstate impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol . The court has been deliberating on Yoon's political fate after he was impeached in December by the National Assembly, controlled by the liberal opposition, over imposition of martial law, leading to a massive political crisis. If the court rules against Yoon, a presidential election will be held within two months. If his impeachment is overturned, he would immediately resume his presidential duties. The impeachment motion accused Yoon of suppressing National Assembly activities, attempting to detain politicians and others and undermining peace in violation of the constitution and other laws. *—PTI*

Indian threatens to kill crew member on S'pore flight

SINGAPORE, 1 APRIL

An Indian national was charged with criminal intimidation on Tuesday for allegedly causing a ruckus on board a Singapore-bound flight from Sydney and threatening to kill a male crew member. Kolathu James Leo, 42, faces multiple charges, including using criminal force against a flight attendant and being intoxicated on board, which jeopardised order and discipline, The Straits Times reported. The incident occurred when he, allegedly intoxicated, began shouting mid-flight. His behaviour reportedly escalated when the cabin crew attempted to calm him down. In a statement on 31 March, police said he became compliant only when he was told that the aircraft would return to Australia if he continued with his disruptive behaviour. *—PTI*

EU says it can counter Trump's tariff move

US to levy taxes on imports from 2 April, which Trump dubbed as Liberation Day

BRUSSELS, 1 APRIL

A top European Union (EU) official warned the US on Tuesday that the world's biggest trade bloc "holds a lot of cards" when it comes to dealing with the Trump administration's new tariffs and has a good plan to retaliate if forced to.

US President Donald Trump has promised to roll out taxes on imports from other countries from Wednesday. He has vowed to impose "reciprocal" tariffs to match the duties that other countries charge on US products, dubbing 2 April "Liberation Day".

"Europe has not started this confrontation. We do not necessarily want to retaliate, but if it is necessary, we have a strong plan to retaliate and we will use it," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told EU lawmakers.

Donald Trump, Ursula von der Leyen. PHOTO: X

The commission, the EU's executive branch, negotiates trade deals on behalf of the bloc's 27 member countries and manages trade disputes on their behalf.

"Europe holds a lot of cards, from trade to technology to the size of our market. But this strength is also built on our readiness to take firm counter measures if necessary. All instruments are on the table," von der Leyen said, at a European Parliament session in Strasbourg, France.

The commission already intends to impose duties on US goods worth some USD 28 billion in mid-April. The EU duties will target steel and aluminium products, textiles, home appliances and farm goods. A lot remains unknown about how Trump's levies will actually be implemented, notably the "reciprocal" tariffs, and the EU wants to assess their impact before taking retaliatory action.

"So many Europeans feel utterly disheartened by the announcement from the United States," von der Leyen said. "This is the largest and most prosperous trade relationship worldwide. We would all be better off if we could find a constructive solution." *—PTI*

Germany dubs Ukraine truce efforts as 'deadlocked'

BERLIN, 1 APRIL

Germany's chief diplomat on Tuesday described US President Donald Trump's efforts to secure a truce in the three-year war between Russia and Ukraine as deadlocked, while China's foreign minister said it was encouraging that the talks between Washington and Moscow on finding a settlement are continuing.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, arriving in Kyiv for an unannounced visit, said that "due to the deadlock" between the US and Russia on forging a ceasefire deal, European allies' continued support for Ukraine in the war is "absolutely crucial".

Trump on Sunday scolded Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, expressing frustration at the continued fighting in a war he had pledged to swiftly stop. *—PTI*

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi PHOTO: X

TRUMP'S POLL REVAMP HITS HURDLE

NEW YORK, 1 APRIL

President Donald Trump's executive order seeking to overhaul the nation's elections faced its first legal challenges Monday as Democratic National Committee and a pair of nonprofits filed two separate lawsuits calling it unconstitutional. Campaign Legal Center and State Democracy Defenders Fund brought the first lawsuit Monday afternoon. DNC, Democratic Governors Association, and Senate and House Democratic leaders followed soon after with complaint of their own. *—PTI*

US FIRES LAWYERS IN JUSTICE DEPT

WASHINGTON, 1 APRIL

Recent firings of career lawyers in Justice Department by the White House is a sign of President Donald Trump's tightening grip over law enforcement agency known for its long tradition of political independence. On Friday, an assistant US attorney in Los Angeles was fired without any explanation in terse email from the White House Presidential Personnel Office shortly after a right-wing activist posted about him on social media, according to a person familiar with the matter. *—PTI*

COURT RELIEF TO VENEZUELANS

SAN FRANCISCO , 1 APRIL

District Judge Edward Chen in San Francisco on Monday paused the Trump administration's plans to end temporary legal protection for hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans. The order is a relief for 3,50,000 Venezuelans whose Temporary Protected Status was scheduled to expire 7 April. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has also announced the end of TPS for an estimated 250,000 additional Venezuelans in September. *—PTI*

Israel strikes building in southern Beirut, killing at least 4 people

BEIRUT, 1 APRIL

Israeli military struck a building in Beirut's southern suburbs early Tuesday, killing at least four people, as the military said it targeted a member of the Hezbollah militant group.

The airstrike came without warning days after Israel launched an attack on the Lebanese capital, Beirut, on Friday for the first time since ceasefire ended fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah militant group in November. Israeli military then had warned residents in the crowded suburbs before the attack after two projectiles were launched from southern Lebanon, which Hezbollah denied firing. At least seven other people were wounded in the airstrike, said Lebanese Health Ministry.

Israeli military said the latest strike targeted a Hezbollah member who had been helping Palestinian Hamas group in the Gaza Strip in attacks against Israel. It said the airstrike was "under the direction of Shin Bet," Israel's domestic intelligence agency.

Senior Hezbollah legislator Ali Ammar said the group does not want war but was fully prepared to deter any assault. *—PTI*

Palestinian girls dressed for Eid al-Fitr celebrations walk next to destructions in Jabaliya, Gaza Strip on Monday. PHOTO: PTI

Yemen's Houthi rebels claim they downed American drone

Dubai, 1 April

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed Tuesday that they shot down another American MQ-9 Reaper drone, even as the US kept up its campaign of intense airstrikes targeting the group. Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a Houthi military spokesman, separately claimed downing the MQ-9 drone in a pre-recorded video message. Saree described the rebels targeting the drone with "a suitable locally manufactured missile." The Houthis have surface-to-air missiles. *—PTI*

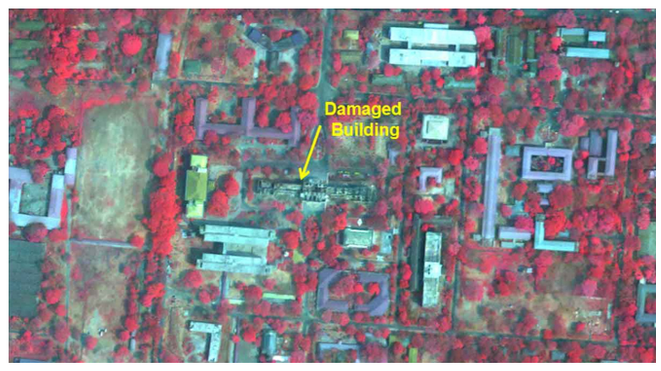
IN A 1ST, WEST BANK TEEN DIES IN ISRAELI JAIL

JERUSALEM, 1 APRIL

A 17-year-old from the West Bank who was held in an Israeli prison for six months without being charged died after collapsing in unclear circumstances, becoming the first Palestinian teen to die in Israeli detention, officials said.

Walid Ahmad was a healthy high schooler before his arrest in September for allegedly throwing stones at soldiers, his family said. Rights groups have documented widespread abuse in Israeli detention facilities holding thousands of Palestinians who were rounded up after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack ignited the war in the Gaza Strip.

Prison authorities deny any systematic abuse and say they investigate accusations of wrongdoing by prison staff. But the Israeli ministry overseeing prisons acknowledges conditions inside detention facilities have been reduced to the minimum level allowed under Israeli law. *—PTI*



Chances of finding more survivors significantly decrease after 72 hours PHOTO: PTI

Myanmar earthquake death toll exceeds 2,700

BANGKOK, 1 APRIL

Rescue operations in Myanmar are slowing as the death toll from devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake that struck on March 29 exceeds 2,700, with over 4,500 others injured. Authorities report that 441 people are still missing, and death toll is expected to rise. In one hopeful instance, a 63-year-old woman was rescued after being trapped for 91 hours in Naypyitaw, Myanmar's capital. Experts say chances of finding more survivors significantly decrease after 72 hours.

The earthquake hit a vast area, causing widespread destruction, particularly in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, and Naypyitaw. Thousands of buildings have collapsed, including religious structures, where up to 50 Buddhist monks died. World Health Organization reports over 10,000 buildings are severely damaged or destroyed, leaving many areas without power, communication, and access to vital supplies.

International rescue teams, including those from Russia, China, India, and the UAE, are on the ground, but aid efforts are hindered by damaged infrastructure and Myanmar's ongoing civil war. UN has warned of rising health risks, with shortages of food, clean water, and medical supplies exacerbating the crisis. Disease outbreaks, including respiratory infections and dengue fever, are a major concern. *—PTI*

China launches major military exercises around Taiwan

BEIJING, 1 APRIL

China on Tuesday launched joint military exercises consisting of multiple forces around Taiwan as a "stern warning" against Taiwanese independence forces and to assert its sovereignty over it.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theatre Command on Tuesday started to conduct joint exercises around Taiwan Island, a spokesperson of the Command said.

The theatre command organised its army, navy, air and rocket forces to close in on Taiwan Island from multiple directions, said Senior Colonel Shi Yi, the spokesperson for the theatre command was quoted by state-run Xinhua news agency.

China, which claims Taiwan as part of its mainland, has conducted similar military exercises in the recent past, but this is the first major military exercise around Taiwan since US President Donald Trump assumed power for a second tenure.

According to Shi, these drills mainly focus on sea-air combat-readiness patrols, joint seizure of comprehensive superiority, assault on maritime and ground targets, and blockade of key areas and sea lanes to test the joint operation capabilities of the troops.

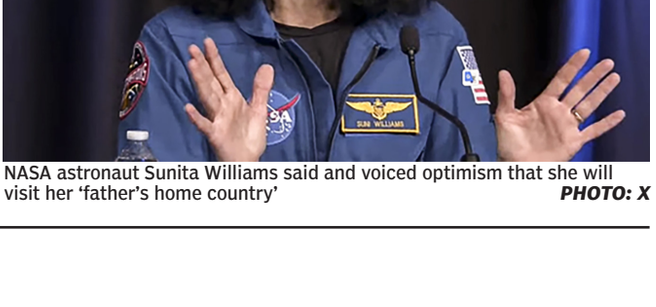
The drills serve as a stern warning and forceful deterrent against "Taiwan independence" separatist forces, and are a legitimate and necessary action to safeguard China's sovereignty and national unity, Shi said. *—PTI*

MALAYSIA: GAS PIPE EXPLODES, 100 PLUS INJURED

KUALA LUMPUR, 1 APRIL

A fire caused by a burst gas pipe spread to several homes and sent a fireball soaring into the sky outside Malaysia's largest city Tuesday, injuring more than 100 people.

The towering inferno near a gas station in Putra Heights outside Kuala Lumpur was visible for kilometres and lasted for several hours. National oil company Petronas said the fire started at one of its gas pipelines at 8.10am and the affected pipeline was later isolated. At least 49 houses were damaged and 112 people were injured, with 63 sent to the hospital, Selangor Deputy Police Chief Mohamad Zaini Abu Hassan told national Bernama news agency. *—PTI*



A massive fire burns after a gas pipeline burst on Tuesday, 1 April, 2025, in Putra Heights in Puchong, Malaysia. PHOTO: PTI

FATHER'S HOME COUNTRY

India is amazing from space, says Sunita Williams

NEW YORK, 1 APRIL

India is amazing from space, NASA astronaut Sunita Williams said and voiced optimism that she will visit her "father's home country" and share experiences about space exploration with people there.

Williams made these remarks during a press conference on Monday. "India is amazing. Every time we went over the Himalayas, and I'll tell you, Butch got some incredible pictures of the Himalayas. Just amazing," Williams said.

The 59-year-old NASA astronaut and fellow astronaut Butch Wilmore addressed reporters at their first joint press conference days after they returned to Earth as part of the SpaceX Crew-9 mission, having been stranded in space for over nine months.

- Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Williams also said on Monday that they hold themselves partly responsible for what went wrong on their space sprint-turned-marathon and would fly on Boeing's Starliner again.

"And you can see, like I've described it before, just like this ripple that happened, obviously when the plates collided, and then as it flows down into India. It's many, many colours," she said.

"Just incredible to look at at night as well as during the day, highlighted, of course, by the Himalayas, which is just incredible as a forefront going down into India," she said.

DUO OWNS UP BOTCH

Meanwhile, astronauts Butch Wilmore and Williams also said on Monday that they hold themselves partly responsible for what went wrong on their space sprint-turned-marathon and would fly on Boeing's Starliner again.

Wilmore said, "I'll start and point the finger and I'll blame me. I could have asked some questions and the answers to those questions could have turned the tide," he said. "All the way up and down the chain. We all are responsible. We all own this." *—PTI*

NASA astronaut Sunita Williams said and voiced optimism that she will visit her 'father's home country' PHOTO: X

PHOTO: X

Gold surges Rs 2,000, hits record of Rs 94,150 per 10g

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Gold prices surged Rs 2,000, the steepest in nearly two months, hits fresh peak of Rs 94,150 per 10g in the national capital on Tuesday amid persistent buying by stockists and jewellers, according to All India Sarafa Association. On Friday, gold of 99.9 per cent purity settled at Rs 92,150 per 10g. Analysts said trading sentiment remained firm as gold climbed in the overseas markets on stronger demand for the alternative investment with equity markets sliding. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also surged by Rs 2,000 to reach high of Rs 93,700 per 10g. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 24 paise to close at 85.50 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 28 MARCH

The rupee appreciated 24 paise to close at 85.50 against the USD on Friday, logging the best monthly gain in over six years, supported by a resurgence of foreign fund inflows. In March this year the local unit appreciated 2.17 per cent, the maximum since November 2018 when the local unit had registered a gain of over five per cent. In the current financial year, the rupee has depreciated more than two per cent. On 2 April, 2024 it was quoted at 83.42 against USD. Forex dealers said domestic unit has witnessed significant appreciation supported by robust foreign fund inflows into the capital market. Foreign investors have infused over Rs 32,000 crore in the past six consecutive trading sessions. RBI data released on Friday showed the country's forex reserves jumped by USD 4.529 billion to USD 658.8 billion during the week ended 21 March. *—PTI*

Power consumption surges nearly 7% to 148.48 BN units

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

India's power consumption surged by nearly seven per cent to 148.48 billion units in March 2025, up from 138.95 BU in the same month last year, driven by rising temperatures. Peak power demand increased, reaching 235.22 GW, compared to 221.68 GW in March 2024. Experts predict further growth in demand, with peak power expected to touch 277 GW in the summer of 2025. India Meteorological Department forecasts hotter-than-usual temperatures from April to June, particularly in central and eastern India, increasing the likelihood of more heatwaves and higher electricity consumption. As a result, electricity demand may grow by nine-10 pe cent this summer. *—PTI*

Tokyo Gas acquires Chevron's Texas, assets for $525M

TOKYO, 1 APRIL

TG Natural Resources, a joint venture between Tokyo Gas Co and Castleton Commodities International, is set to acquire a 70 per cent stake in Chevron USA Inc's East Texas gas assets for USD 525 million. This strategic move, announced on Tuesday, enhances Tokyo Gas's presence in the US energy market, coinciding with President Donald Trump's push for increased US gas exports. Although Tokyo Gas insists the decision was made prior to Trump's election, the investment aligns with current policies. Of the total sum, USD 75 million will be paid in cash, while USD 450 million will be allocated to fund the Haynesville development. Currently focused on the US market, Tokyo Gas sees potential for future liquefied natural gas exports to Japan. Japan, resource-poor, relies heavily on imports, predominantly from Australia and the US. *—PTI*

Sensex tanks 1.80% ahead of US 'Liberation Day'

Sensex crashes due to selling of IT and private banking shares

MUMBAI, 1 APRIL

Indian stock markets experienced a severe decline on Tuesday, with the benchmark Sensex crashing by 1,390 points due to widespread selling in IT and private banking shares. This downturn comes amid growing uncertainty surrounding the imminent rollout of reciprocal tariffs by the United States on 2 April, an event designated as 'Liberation Day' by President Donald Trump.

Beginning the new financial year on a disturbing note, the 30-share BSE Sensex plummeted by 1,390.41 points, or 1.80 per cent, closing at 76,024.51, with 28 of its components finishing lower and only two advancing. During the session, the index fell by as much as 1,502.74 points, or 1.94 per cent, dipping to 75,912.18.

The NSE Nifty saw a decline of 353.65 points, or 1.50 per cent, settling at 23,165.70. These losses mark the most significant single-day declines for the key indices in over a month.

The anticipated US tariffs have led to a turbulent trading environment, particularly affecting sectors like IT that are heavily exposed to the US market.

The NSE Nifty dropped 353.65 points or 1.50 per cent to 23,165.70 PHOTO: X

Among the notable laggards in the Sensex pack were HCL Tech, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, and Reliance Industries. In contrast, IndusInd Bank was one of the few gainers, climbing over 5 per cent.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments, remarked that "the IT sector was among the hardest hit," while Ajit Mishra, SVP of Research at Religare Broking, highlighted fears about global trade impacts leading to today's sell-off.

In the broader market context, the BSE midcap index fell by 1.04 per cent, while the smallcap index experienced a modest rise of 0.07 per cent.

Notably, Vodafone Idea's shares surged nearly 19 per cent after the government converted a portion of its dues into equity.

Despite the turmoil in the Indian markets, other Asian markets, including Seoul, Tokyo, and Shanghai, closed positively, and European markets were also trading higher. *—PTI*

India-US trade deal may include high-tariff items

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

A potential trade agreement between India and US could focus on critical sectors including agriculture, automobiles, and pharmaceuticals, according to a report by Jefferies. These sectors are politically and economically sensitive for India due to high tariff rates.

The report indicates that the trade deal may encompass high-tariff items, particularly agricultural commodities. India has historically maintained elevated import duties on various goods, particularly automobiles and electronics, to shield domestic industries from foreign competition, especially from China. However, in negotiations with the US, India might need to reassess its tariff strategies.

Moreover, any concessions made to the US are expected to align with ongoing trade discussions with the European Union and UK. Pharmaceutical sector is likely to be a focal point, especially concerning intellectual property rights, as US could advocate for stricter patent regulations that may influence India's robust generic drug industry. *—ANI*

India must assess US' trade demands: GTRI

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

India must evaluate US trade demands against its own national priorities, development goals, and cultural values, according to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

The think tank's remarks follow the release of the US Trade Representative's (USTR) National Trade Estimate (NTE) Report 2025, which highlights ongoing trade tensions. GTRI warned that proposed changes in agriculture, digital governance, and public health could jeopardise India's ability to protect small farmers, ensure food safety, uphold cultural norms, and secure its digital landscape.

Regarding India's stringent dairy import restrictions, Srivastava commented that while US deems them excessively strict, they are vital for India's food safety standards. Additionally, the debate over data localisation regulations mandating foreign payment providers to store data domestically continues to attract US criticism, framed as a barrier to US tech firms. *—PTI*

India to lead G20 growth: Moody's

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Moody's Ratings haspredicted that India will maintain growth rate of 6.5 per cent during the fiscal year 2025-26, highest among both advanced and emerging G-20 nations. This growth is expected to bolstered by recent tax measures and continued monetary easing from Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

In latest report on emerging markets, Moody's highlighted exposure of these economies to turbulence resulting from shifts in US policies, which could impact global capital flows, supply chains, and trade dynamics. It noted that larger emerging markets, such as India and Brazil, possess resources necessary to navigate such uncertainties.

Moody's projected that India's growth rate would decline slightly from 6.7 per cent in 2024-25, while inflation is anticipated to average 4.5 per cent in current fiscal year, down from 4.9 per cent previously. Indian government recently increased the income tax rebate to Rs 12 lakh from Rs 7 lakh, providing approximately Rs 1 lakh crore in relief to the middle class, and the RBI cut interest rates to 6.25 per cent .

The agency posited that the uncertainties surrounding US policies may elevate capital outflow risks, yet highlighted India's robust, domestically-oriented economy alongside its substantial foreign exchange reserves, which collectively bolster investor confidence. *—PTI*

GOVERNMENT ACQUIRE SHARES

Vodafone Idea shares jump 10%, hit upper circuit limit

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Shares of Vodafone Idea soared by 10 per cent on Tuesday, following news that the government's stake in the company will more than double to 48.99 per cent.

This increase results from the government's decision to acquire shares valued at Rs 36,950 crore in lieu of outstanding spectrum auction dues.

On Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the stock surged by 9.99 per cent to reach Rs 7.49, hitting its upper circuit limit. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), shares climbed 10 per cent to Rs 7.48, the highest permissible trading limit for the day.

With the latest move, the Indian government, already the single-largest shareholder in the struggling Vodafone Idea with a 22.6 per cent stake, will surpass the combined holdings of the company's promoters – Vodafone and the Aditya Birla Group, which currently hold 14.76 per cent and 22.56 per cent, respectively.

In a company filing, Vodafone Idea announced that the Ministry of Communications plans to convert the outstanding dues into equity shares, to be issued to the Government of India.

A total of 3,695 crore equity shares, with a nominal value of Rs 10 each, will be issued within 30 days, following approval from the relevant authorities, including the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). *—PTI*

3 FIRMS GETS IPO APPROVED BY SEBI

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Managed workplace solutions company IndiQube, agrochemical firm GSP Crop Science, and FMCG player Ganesh Consumer Products have received Sebi's go-ahead to raise funds through initial public offerings (IPO), an update with markets regulator showed on Tuesday. The three firms are looking to raise at least Rs 1,260 crore collectively through the initial share sale. Sebi has returned the draft IPO papers of two firms -- EAAA India Alternatives Ltd, an Edelweiss subsidiary, and Neelkanth Realtors. GNG Electronics and Anlon Healthcare have withdrawn their IPO papers amid volatile equity markets. Shares of these firms will be listed on BSE and NSE. *—PTI*

GST kitty grows 10% in March to Rs 1.96l cr, second-highest ever

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

India's GST collections in March 2025 grew by 9.9 per cent, reaching Rs 1.96 lakh crore, the second-highest monthly revenue ever.

The rise was driven by a strong performance in both domestic transactions and imports.

GST from domestic transactions rose by 8.8 per cent, amounting to Rs 1.49 lakh crore, while GST from imported goods increased by 13.56 per cent, totaling Rs 46,919 crore.

The total collection included Rs 38,145 crore in Central GST, Rs 49,891 crore in State GST, and Rs 95,853 crore in Integrated GST (IGST), with an additional Rs 12,253 crore from cess.

Total refunds issued in March were up by 41 per cent, amounting to Rs 19,615 crore. After adjusting for refunds, net GST revenue stood at Rs 1.76 lakh crore, marking a 7.3 per cent growth compared to the same month last year.

The gross GST collection for the financial year 2024-25 stood at Rs 22.08 lakh crore, reflecting a 9.4 per cent year-on-year growth PHOTO: X

The gross GST collection for the financial year 2024-25 stood at Rs 22.08 lakh crore, reflecting a 9.4 per cent year-on-year growth.

Deloitte India's MS Mani noted that the increase in collections was driven by year-end sales, and praised the steady monthly growth.

However, regional disparities were observed, with states like Maharashtra, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh showing growth above 10 per cent, while Gujarat, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu saw more modest increases. —PTI

JAIN RESOURCE FILES DRAFT PAPER FOR RS 2,000 CR

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Jain Resource Recycling Ltd has filed draft papers with markets regulator Sebi seeking its approval to raise Rs 2,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO).

IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) valued at Rs 1,500 crore, according to Draft Red Herring Prospectus filed on 30 March. OFS comprises sale of shares worth Rs 1,430 crore by promoter Kamlesh Jain and Rs 70 crore by shareholder Mayank Pareek.

Tamil Nadu-based company may consider raising Rs 100 crore in pre-IPO placement round. If such placement is completed, amount raised through the fresh issue will be reduced. Jain Resource Recycling is primarily focused on manufacturing of non-ferrous metal products through the recycling of non-ferrous metal scrap. – PTI

ATF, COMMERCIAL LPG RATES CUT

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

A significant reduction in fuel prices has been announced in India, effective immediately. The price of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), also known as jet fuel, has been slashed by 6.1 per cent. This reduction translates to a decrease of Rs 5,870.54 per kl, bringing the new price to Rs 89,441.18 per kl in Delhi.

In addition to ATF price cut, commercial LPG prices have also been reduced. In Delhi, price of a 19kg commercial LPG cylinder has been decreased by Rs 41, bringing the new price to Rs 1,762. This reduction is expected to provide relief to businesses, particularly those in the hospitality sector, which rely heavily on LPG for cooking purposes.

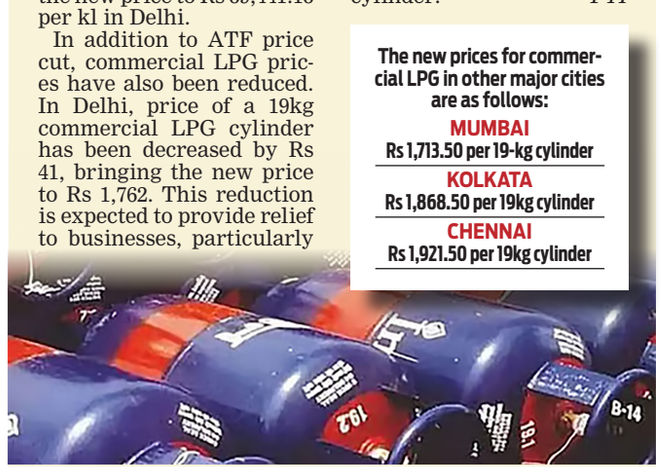
It is worth noting that fuel prices in India vary from state to state due to differences in local taxes and transportation costs. However, the price of domestic LPG cylinders remains unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder. *—PTI*

The new prices for commercial LPG in other major cities are as follows:

MUMBAI
Rs 1,713.50 per 19-kg cylinder

KOLKATA
Rs 1,868.50 per 19kg cylinder

CHENNAI
Rs 1,921.50 per 19kg cylinder



VIOLATION OF TERMS

WhatsApp bans over 9.7M Indian accounts

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

WhatsApp on Tuesday said it banned more than 9.7 million accounts in India during February 2025, 1.4 million of which were proactively banned prior to any user reports.

Releasing its monthly safety report, the Meta-owned messaging app also shared tips on using the platform responsibly. It listed out ways to do so, including respecting boundaries, avoiding spamming with bulk and auto messages, and using broadcast lists responsibly. "According to the report for the month of February 2025, WhatsApp banned over 9.7 million accounts in India for violating its Terms of Service. More than 1.4 million of these accounts were proactively banned prior to any user reports," WhatsApp said.

A WhatsApp spokesperson further said that the platform has consistently invested in Artificial Intelligence and other technology, data scientists and experts, and processes, to keep users safe on the platform.

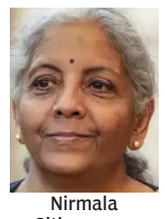
"In accordance with the IT Rules 2021, our latest published report outlines user complaints received, actions taken, and WhatsApp's proactive approach to preventing abuse, including accounts that were proactively banned, before any reports from users," the spokesperson added. *—PTI*

More than 1.4 million of these accounts were proactively banned prior to any user reports PHOTO: X

India's capital expenditure rises to Rs 11.21l cr for Fy26

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced a substantial rise in India's capital expenditure, contradicting concerns of a potential cut. The allocation for the 2025-26 fiscal year has increased to Rs 11.21 lakh crore, up from Rs 11.11 lakh crore in the previous year.



Nirmala Sitharaman PHOTO: PTI

Sitharaman clarified the government's stance during a Question Hour session in the Rajya Sabha. She was responding to a query by senior Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram, who sought to understand the reasoning behind the reduced capital expenditure in the revised budget estimate for FY25.

The finance minister explained that loans to states under the interest-free 50-year special assistance scheme for capital expenditure have also seen a proportional increase. Furthermore, Sitharaman highlighted the rise in the release of loans to states since the scheme's introduction in 2020-21.

Tamil Nadu, for instance, has cumulatively received Rs 17,189.05 crore.

This development is expected to have a positive impact on India's economy, particularly in the infrastructure and development sectors. —PTI

SA's coach resigns due to personal reasons

JOHANNESBURG, 1 APRIL

South Africa's white-ball head coach Rob Walter will step down from his role at the end of the month due to personal reasons. Walter has attributed his resignation to personal reasons, which Cricket South Africa has accepted. Walter, who held the position since March 2023, has played an instrumental role in South Africa's recent successes on the global stage. Under his leadership, the Proteas made history by reaching their first-ever ICC Men's T20 World Cup final in 2024, where they finished as runners up to India in Barbados. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Kasatkina looks ahead under Australian flag

DUBAI, 1 APRIL

Russian-born Daria Kasatkina said she was emotional and excited to begin a fresh chapter in her career under the Australian flag at the ongoing Charleston Open after being granted permanent residency last week. The 27-year-old has been playing on the tour as a neutral athlete after Russian and Belarusian players were banned from competing under their flags following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, for which Belarus has been a staging ground. "It's my first official day as an Australian player," said Kasatkina, who dipped into Australian colloquialism and referred to reporters in Charleston as "mates" on Monday. "Honestly, it feels different, I'm not going to lie. It's emotional for me. *—PTI*

UTT adds Kolkata franchise after exit of Puneri Paltan

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) have added new franchise Kolkata ThunderBlades for the upcoming season starting next month while the owners of Puneri Paltan have exited the league.Bengaluru Smashers, owned by the Punit Balan Group, have renamed themselves as Pune Jaguars following the exit of Puneri Paltan. The tournament will continue to have eight teams with the addition of the Kolkata franchise and the exit of Puneri Paltan. There will be no team representing Bengaluru this seasonThe latest season will be held in Ahmedabad from May 29 to 15 June.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Palmas Cillessen is recovering from surgery

MADRID, 1 APRIL

Dutch goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen successfully underwent emergency surgery after his intestine was perforated in a collision with another player in a Spanish league game, his club Las Palmas said Tuesday. Cillessen had to be carried off the field on a stretcher near the half-hour mark of Las Palmas' 1-1 draw at Celta Vigo on Monday. The 35-year-old goalkeeper was hit in the abdomen by the left knee of Celta player Borja Iglesias while diving to get to the ball before the striker. Cillessen was taken to a hospital in Vigo where the keyhole surgery was performed.*—PTI*

RCB eyes a smart outing from bowlers against GT

The MCS pitch has always had this allegiance towards batters

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's desire to make their home-coming a memorable occasion pivots around an experienced bowling unit maintaining its excellent form when they face Gujarat Titans in an IPL match here on Wednesday.

The bowlers played a big hand in RCB taming two traditionally tough opponents in Kolkata and Chennai, but now they face a different challenge at home against the Titans.

The Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch has always had this allegiance towards batters, evidenced by the three 260-plus totals here.

Captain Shubman Gill and B. Sai Sudharsan have already developed into a good opening pair, and RCB will be eager to prevent their alliance from blossoming through Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar.

The Aussie can hit the hard lengths to find disconcerting bounce, and Bhuvneshwar can operate in a tight line while troubling the batters with his ability to swing the new ball. This versatility makes the RCB pace pair a massive threat in most conditions. Yash Dayal, the left-arm pacer, too, has grown into a dependable and crafty support bowler to the seniors. *—PTI*

RCB VS GT

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	5
RCB Won:	3
GT Won:	2

RCB vs GT Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

PHOTO: PTI

> It was a complete performance. Winning the toss, bowling first, and executing their plans beautifully. Bringing in an extra seamer, Ashwani, who was outstanding
>
> -Kane Williamson, New Zealand star

I engage in constructive self-criticism: Arshdeep

GLeft-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh, who has evolved into a death-overs specialist since bursting onto the scene, has attributed his success to constructive self-criticism and steadily improving by half a percent after every game.The 26-year-old Arshdeep, who plays for Punjab Kings in the IPL, picked up the important wickets of Sai Sudharsan and Sherfane Rutherford in his team's 11-run victory over Gujarat Titans in their only match so far this season.

Ashwani is a lot quicker than people recognise at first: Ryan

MUMBAI, 1 APRIL

Mumbai Indians' unheralded fast bowler Ashwani Kumar, who became the first Indian to take four wickets on IPL debut, is a "lot quicker than people recognise at first", says his teammate Ryan Rickelton.

The left-arm Punjab seamer took 4/24 on Monday to blow away Kolkata Knight Riders as Mumbai Indians recorded an eight-wicket win, which took them to the sixth spot in the points table.

"He's a lot quicker than I think people recognise at first, that's a great attribute he has, and he can swing the new ball," Rickelton told the media after the match here at the Wankhede Stadium.

"He's a lot quicker than you think, and he rushes you a little bit lower as well. He's a great addition, obviously to the group, and the wicket can suit him."

"Looking forward to seeing if he gets an opportunity with the new ball to see that other set of skills come through. He's a nice find for MI and looking forward to seeing how he goes," he added.

Rickelton said the Punjab seamer, who had only played four senior T20 matches, four List A matches, and two Ranji Trophy games before his IPL debut, executed his plans well.

"I've played a few warm-up games with him, keeping (the wickets) to him and batting against him in the nets. He's a nice bowler. He can swing the new ball, and he executed his plan well," he said.

"The group's happy for him. But yeah, it's cool that he got an opportunity. The group's really chuffed that he managed to get out of the match performance," he added.

KKR's Ramandeep Singh, who is also from Punjab and trains in the same academy as Ashwani, termed him a "talented cricketer". *—PTI*

Game has changed from 2022 to 2025 : Prasidh

BENGALURU, 1 APRIL

Having been forced to stay away from IPL since 2022 due to injuries, Gujarat Titans pacer Prasidh Krishna is slowly getting used to the "pace of the game" as his body gets tuned to the rigours of a fast-paced format.

Prasidh returned to the league through a contract with the GT, and went for 41 runs against Punjab Kings, his first match in the tournament after three years. However, the Karnataka man came back brilliantly against Mumbai Indians to register a spell of 4-0-18-2. "As much as I try to tell myself that it's just another tournament, just another game, I did feel that I'm coming in after a few years, especially coming in not having played a lot of T20s in the last two years because the pace of the game has changed from 2022 to 2025,"

Prasidh said on the eve of the match against the Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

The 29-year-old conceded that it's a bit of a time-consuming process. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Edwards takes charge as England Women's head coach

LONDON, 1 APRIL

Charlotte Edwards has been announced as the new Head Coach of the England Women's team by the England and Wales Cricket Board.

Edwards is a former England captain who represented her country over 300 times, winning two World Cups and lifting the Ashes five times across a 20-year playing career.

Since retiring from playing in 2017, Edwards has coached across English domestic cricket and global T20 leagues, enjoying success with Southern Vipers in regional cricket, Southern Brave in The Hundred, Sydney Sixers in the Women's Big Bash League. *—PTI*

MOTOR RACING

Arjun to drive for team HRT Ford

MEUSPATH, 1 APRIL

India's Arjun Maini will drive for the HRT Ford Performance team in his fifth year in the German touring car racing series.

Last year, Maini secured his best result of his DTM career by finishing seventh in the drivers' standings. In the previous three seasons (from 2021 to 2023), the 27-year-old from Bengaluru had finished 12th, 19th, and 20th, respectively.

The official test day for the new DTM season will take place at the Motorsport Arena Oschersleben on Wednesday.

Haupt Racing Team (HRT) enters two Ford Mustang GT3s in the top-class sprint series for the first time this year. The cockpits for Ford's factory-supported DTM comeback after 36 years will be occupied by Maini and Fabio Scherer.

The opening race weekend is scheduled from April 25-27.

Maini has been competing successfully for HRT in various racing series since 2022 and achieved three podium finishes and one pole position in the DTM with the team last season.

The Indian has made a total of 64 appearances in the prestigious sprint series to date. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Red Bull unveils special livery for Japanese Grand Prix

PARIS, 1 APRIL

Oracle Red Bull Racing will honour a Championship-winning partnership with Honda at this week's 2025 Japanese Grand Prix as part of a team takeover in Tokyo and Suzuka. Here is all you need to know: With Verstappen and new Japanese teammate Yuki Tsunoda taking on Suzuka this weekend, Oracle Red Bull Racing will celebrate the final season of one of the most successful partnerships in motorsport history with a special livery inspired by Honda's RA272 first victory in the sport. The striking white and red look will adorn both Oracle Red Bull Racing RB21s because this season marks the 60th anniversary of Honda's first victory in Formula One. *—PTI*

Vandana calls time on international career

NEW DELHI, 1 APRIL

Vandana Katariya, the most-capped Indian woman hockey player, brought curtains on her illustrious 15-year international career on Tuesday, saying the decision taken at her "zenith" was both "bittersweet and empowering".

The 32-year-old veteran striker represented India in 320 international games, scoring 158 goals. She was also a part of the Indian team that cherished the historic fourth-place finish at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"Today, with a heavy yet grateful heart, I announce my retirement from international hockey, a decision that feels both bittersweet and empowering," Katariya wrote in an Instagram post.

"I'm not stepping away because the fire in me has dimmed or the hockey in my tank has run dry, but because I want to bow out at my zenith, while I'm still at my very best.

"This isn't a goodbye born out of exhaustion; it's a choice to leave the international stage on my terms, with my head held high and my stick still blazing. The roar of the crowd, the thrill of every goal, and the pride of wearing India's colors will forever echo in my soul," she added.

A pillar of Indian hockey since her senior debut in 2009, Katariya played a crucial role in defining moments for the sport. *—PTI*

Adani Golf C'ship: Thangaraja, Talwar share lead

GREATER NOIDA, 1 APRIL

Sri Lankan N Thangaraja and Greater Noida's Saptak Talwar, playing at his home course, produced a matching five-under 67 to share the lead after the opening round of the Rs 1.5 crore Adani Invitational Golf Championship here on Tuesday.

Om Prakash Chouhan of Mhow, Delhi golfer Arjun Prasad, Gurugram's Sunhit Bishnoi, and Bangladeshi Md Somrat Sikdar were bunched in tied third place with identical scores of four-under 68 at the Jaypee Greens Golf & Spa Resort. Yuvraj Sandhu and Shaurya Bhattacharya, both winners this season, were in tied 10th place at 70. A couple of three-putts for bogeys on the back nine resulted in a slow start for local lad Saptak, who made the turn at one-over.Saptak then got on a roll on the front-nine as he picked up an eagle and four birdies between the first and the sixth hole. His eagle putt and two birdie putts were from a range of 12 to 17 feet. Talwar also landed his tee shot within three feet on the par-3 third for a birdie. Thangaraja, a winner on the PGTI last month, went bogey-free on day one.

He scored two birdies on the front nine courtesy of a tap-in and a 30-foot conversion. *—PTI*

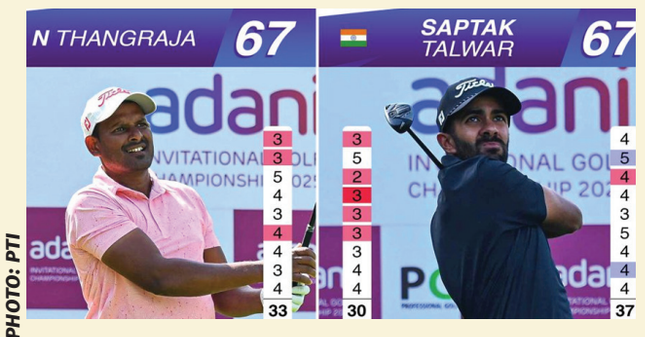


PHOTO: PTI

ERLING HAALAND INJURY

MC forward sidelined for up to 7 weeks: Pep

LONDON, 1 APRIL

Manchester City striker Erling Haaland will be out of action for up to seven weeks after suffering an ankle injury, manager Pep Guardiola said ahead of Wednesday's Premier League home game against relegation-threatened Leicester City.

The 24-year-old Norway international, who has scored 30 goals in 40 matches in all competitions this season for City, picked up the injury in its FA Cup quarterfinal win at Bournemouth on Sunday."Sometimes there are years when these kinds of things happen. It happened all season. I would say that it could have been different if it was the end of the season (before the Club World Cup)," Guardiola told reporters on Tuesday."So with all the injuries we have had this season, I'm so sorry for them and for Erling as well. So (I wish him) a good recovery, as speedy as possible, then come back. They told me the doctors will be between five to seven weeks. So hopefully the end of the season and by the Club World Cup he will be ready," he added.City is fifth in the Premier League table, trailing fourth-placed Chelsea by a point with nine games remaining. "We don't have another player with his skills or his specific qualities," Guardiola said."We know that. But we have to adapt. For many years, we have played in different ways up front. It depends on the quality of the players. This is the first time, alongside the first season when I was here nine years ago, that we have had to fight to qualify for the Champions League," he added."We have nine games left, we know exactly what we have to do five at home, four away. We have to win our home games and we are going to try (to qualify for Champions League)," Guardiola said. Guardiola was also asked about the protests planned by City supporters groups against the club's ticket prices and recent partnership with a secondary ticket agency."

They can express freely what they want, and the club has made its arguments and can also express. *—PTI*

'ARNOLD'S POSSIBLE MOVE TO MADRID DOESN'T AFFECT TITLE'

LONDON, 1 APRIL

Liverpool's bid to clinch a record-tying Premier League title hasn't been affected by persistent reports linking Trent Alexander-Arnold with a move to Real Madrid at the end of the season, manager Arne Slot said Tuesday.

Sections of the British media reported during the international break that Madrid is in discussions about finalizing a deal to bring in Alexander-Arnold, who is in the last year of his contract at Liverpool and would be available on a free transfer. Neither club has publicly commented on a potential deal. Slot said his club has lived the entire season with speculation about Alexander-Arnold as well as both Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk, who are also out of contract at the end of the season.

"It's a situation that has been there for eight or nine months now," Slot said, "and I think all three players have performed so well under these circumstances, so it doesn't affect me at all." *—PTI*